

PRAAYER AGREEMENT:  
A STRATEGY FOR MULTIGENERATIONAL  
CHURCH HEALTH AND GROWTH

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
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We will devote ourselves to Prayer and the Ministry of the Word.

—Acts 6:4

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

—1 Corinthians 1:10

## **Wonderful Power**

Eliza E. Hewitt

No matter how hard goes the battle of life  
God's children need never despair.  
His conquering grace giveth peace 'mid the strife.  
There's wonderful power in prayer

*Chorus:*  
*Wonderful power*

*A wonderful power in prayer*  
*For it moveth the Arm that moveth the worlds*  
*There's a wonderful power in prayer*

We know that the roses not always will bloom,  
The skies will not always be fair;  
But go to the Father to brighten the gloom,  
There is wonderful power in prayer.

Perhaps you are seeking a soul far astray;  
That name to the mercy-seat bear;  
The Shepherd Himself will go with you today,  
There is wonderful power in prayer.

Through all the swift changes that come to us here,  
Till white robes of glory we wear,  
We'll look up to Jesus for comfort and cheer,  
There is wonderful power in prayer.

## **I Found the Answer**

Johnny Lange

I was weak and weary, I had gone astray,  
Walking in the darkness, I couldn't find my way.  
Then a light came shining, to lead me from despair,  
All my sins are forgiven, I was free from care.

*Chorus:*

*I found the answer, I learned to pray,*  
*With faith to guide me, I found the way.*  
*The sun is shining for me each day,*  
*I found the answer, I learned to pray.*

I was sad and lonely, all my hopes were gone,  
My days were long and dreary, I couldn't carry on.  
Then I found the courage to keep my head up high,  
Once again I'm happy, and here's the reason why.

Keep your Bible with you, read it every day,  
Always count your blessings and always stop to pray.  
Learn to keep believing and faith will see you through,  
Seek to know contentment, and it will come to you.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

God used two individuals to birth truth in me. The first, Rev. Horace W. Sheppard was the pastor who won me to Christ and grounded me in truth. His illustrative accounts of prayer exploits impregnated me with a hunger to be one who “prays through.” Within his church were significant prayer warriors who taught me by their examples to seek the Lord with all my heart. Pastor Sheppard’s powerful preaching created in me a passionate hunger to communicate truth in the pulpit like my spiritual father.

The second was Mae Gadpaille, a dear woman old enough to be my grandmother whom God used to keep me rising early in the mornings for prayer long after I regretted ever starting Early Morning Prayer Meetings at our church. For five years between 1986 and 1991, I met prayer warriors from 5:00—6:00 AM, Monday through Friday, and from 7:00—9:00 AM on Saturdays to pray, and 99% of the time, Mother Gadpaille was there winter, spring, summer, and fall. If she arrived before me, she would lovingly scold me with the words, “My mother taught me it is better to be an hour early before you’re a minute late.” Knowing she would be on time at our place of prayer forced me into a faithful diligence that birthed a prayer-warrior anointing in my life and ministry.

Third, I wish to acknowledge my appreciation for a denominational mentor, Dr. James Earl Massey. Dr. Massey has been a consistent encourager by his words and exceptional example. His passion for the truth of Scripture leads him to instruct his students and mentees to study to allow the text to speak. His insightful words about the art of preaching in class, his powerful, faithful exposition of the text in the pulpit, and his wise, patient one-on-one dealings with me over the years became a tool God used to encourage me toward further study and the pursuit of more accreditation. Dr. Massey epitomizes the wise

words of Vince Lombardi who said, “Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence.”

I wish also to acknowledge my appreciation for two prayer partners whose long-term consistent prayerful influence regularly facilitate my prayer growth and development. The first is Rev. Roland E. Cooper, a man of deep abiding prayer and piety. We have witnessed over the years, through the faithful intercessory covering of each other and our families, all of our offspring becoming passionate for Christ and His kingdom, and our individual lives achieving a Joshua 1:8 and Ephesians 3:20 level of benefit and prosperity. At this writing, for the past 30 years, the agreement between us has resulted in the multiplication of discipleship and the establishment of a unity that has brought about a dominion in our spheres of influence that make us rejoice.

And finally, I wish to acknowledge my deepest appreciation to the wife of my youth, Yvonne, the woman who has walked with me for 45 years. Her consistent devotional life, love of family and me has been an anchoring source of strength. You are one in a million; you've never discouraged me from pursuing God's presence and purpose; your faithful agreement with God's agenda enabled you to walk with me through countless fasting and prayer vigils. Thank you for your constant word of encouragement over the years, “Do all that is in your heart man of God.” I love you.

## GLOSSARY

**Boston Miracle.** The twenty-nine month period in Boston ending in January 1998 where there were no teenage homicide victims.<sup>1</sup>

**Charismatic.** The Charismatic Movement is a Christian movement of God emphasizing the modern day use of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church. Though there are more gifts than those listed in 1 Corinthians 12, charismatic teachers usually focus on the nine gifts listed there: a message of wisdom, a message of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in different kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

**Church.** The capital letter “C” indicates the universal Church, the Body of Christ. It may also be used to distinguish a particular denomination.

**church.** The word church without the capital “c” indicates the local church congregation.

**democratic.** Church polity where the votes of the majority rule in the making of decisions.

**Full Gospel.** The term indicates a belief that the gospel, the good news about salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross, includes five benefits believers have a right to expect: (1) forgiveness, freedom from the penalty of sin; (2) deliverance, freedom from the power of sin; (3) healing, freedom from the curse of sin; (4) power, authority over the enemy in order to be an effective witness; (5) prosperity, the ability to provide for your needs and the needs of the kingdom.

**good confession.** Speaking the truth of God’s Word about who you are, what you have, and what you can do in Christ.

**horizontal connection.** This indicates the connection between Christian people in terms of love and fellowship.

**Leader.** The capital letter usually represents the senior pastor of a local church.

**leader.** The word “leader(s)” not capitalized, except at the beginning of a sentence, represents person or persons in leadership positions under the senior pastor.

**prayer cover.** A prayer cover is provided when qualified people of faith pray specifically for an individual.

**theocratic.** Church polity where God rules in the decisions of the church through a group of godly elders.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics according to the Boston Police Department.

**vertical connection.** This indicates the connection between believers and God through worship and prayer.

## ABSTRACT

Considering the current decline of genuine spiritual commitment to Christ and His mission in the average local church coupled with the absence of power to win and disciple the lost, as the senior pastor of a local non-denominational church (Church of God, Anderson, IN), I prayerfully asked, “What needs to be in place for genuine, long-term, spiritual renewal to occur multi-generationally in the churches of my city? Over the course of 40 years in pastoral ministry in New England I’ve learned some basics that, when present and practiced, over time produce healthy results.

1. Impartation – this is what happens when an anointed teacher living the truth teaches in intimate settings where dialogue is possible as opposed to one just teaching the truth.
2. Prayer Anointing – this is where, in the local church, the faith-filled praying of individual believers, partners praying in agreement, and the corporate body praying creates an “open heaven” atmosphere making hearing and understanding truth easier.
3. Unity – this is an anointed agreement initiated by the love and peace of the Holy Spirit, is maintained and practiced using the disciplines of forgiveness, and the ministry and message of reconciliation, and it yields the blessings of abundant life and productive ministry.

Using the Scriptures, the resource materials of Christian scholars and writers, and the experience forged by years of parish ministry, I will delineate a strategy for establishing a “House of Prayer” that will cause a spiritual health and strength to manifest within the local church setting that will result in growth.

# CHAPTER ONE

## A THEOLOGY OF PRAYER AND CHURCH AGREEMENT

### **Introduction to the Problem**

What is prayer; what is agreement? Is all prayer the same? Are there structural frameworks that support agreement more than others? What are the negative consequences of not praying or not agreeing? What is the value of a systematic prayer ministry for church health and growth? Can teaching and practicing prayer patterns improve the spiritual health of the average church member? What steps should be taken? Does having a praying church make ministry decisions less difficult and solutions easier to access by congregants? In what way will agreement support the evangelism and discipleship of the lost? Are there different levels of prayer proficiency and of agreement adherence? What part does faith play in all of this? What part does understanding the enemy, understanding your position in Christ, and invoking the power of the Holy Spirit through prayer for deliverance play in all of this? Where do I begin to create a church that's a "House of Prayer" where agreement is part of the structure and atmosphere?

Strangely enough, in many Christian circles, even where the theological perspective is orthodox, questions like these are not adequately answered because many of us, even pastors and adjunct spiritual leaders in the church, have no consistent prayer life and little clue about how important agreement is or how to achieve it. You cannot give what you do not have, you cannot teach what you do not know, and you cannot know what you do not practice. How true are the words of Jesus in this regard, "Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen" (John 3:11).<sup>1</sup> In a very real sense, the

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version (NIV).

major influence of this thesis is forty-plus years of pastoral ministry and church-ministry experience.

George Barna, in a January 12, 2004 online article entitled “Only Half of Protestant Pastors Have a Biblical Worldview” states, “The most important point is that you can’t give people what you don’t have” (emphasis mine).<sup>2</sup> The article is about a survey based on interviews with 601 Senior Pastors nationwide, representing a random cross-section of Protestant churches. Barna reported that only half (51%) of the country’s Protestant pastors have a biblical worldview. The following excerpt from the article speaks to how fundamental is the matter of knowing and believing when it comes to communicating and imparting truth:

The low percentage of Christians who have a biblical worldview is a direct reflection of the fact that half of our primary religious teachers and leaders do not have one. In some denominations, the vast majority of clergy do not have a biblical worldview, and it shows up clearly in the data related to the theological views and moral choices of people who attend those churches. Our research among people who have a biblical worldview shows that it is a long-term process that requires a lot of purposeful activity: teaching, prayer, conversation, accountability, and so forth. Based on our correlations of worldview and moral behavior, we can confidently argue that if the 51% of pastors who have a biblical worldview were to strategically and relentlessly assist their congregants in adopting such a way of interpreting and responding to life, the impact on our churches, families and society at-large would be enormous.<sup>3</sup>

Here’s my contention given Barna’s assessment: suppose a local church became a house of prayer, where prayer agreement is taught by the pastor and practiced by the members, where a prayer cover is provided by the members for each other, their families, and their community. What would be the outcome? I believe if we recognize, study, analyze, and apply the spiritual discipline of prayer agreement, in the words of Barna, “the impact on

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<sup>2</sup> George Barna, “Only Half Of Protestant Pastors Have A Biblical Worldview” (Ventura, CA.: The Barna Group, Ltd., January 12, 2004), <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/133-only-half-of-protestant-pastors-have-a-biblical-worldview> (accessed March 12, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Barna, “Protestants.”

our churches, families, and society at-large would be enormous.” I am speaking as a senior pastor of 40 years, as one who committed his life to Christ in the 1960’s, as a baby-boomer who grew up in church and is painfully familiar with church polity and procedures. All my ministry experience has been in major cities: born and raised in Philadelphia, PA, schooled in Chicago, IL, and a pastor in Boston, MA since 1972. I believe the principles of church health and growth will work anywhere, whether the church is in a city, a town, a rural area, or suburb. Uncompromised truth will work anywhere.

Speaking of uncompromised truth: while it is appropriate for compromise to influence methods and strategies, compromise has no place in foundational biblical principles of spiritual health and development. Church health and growth are connected to principles of truth. As an old poem in this regard says,

Methods are many,  
Principles are few;  
Methods always change,  
Principles never do.<sup>4</sup>

A basic definition of prayer is “communion with God, usually comprising petition, adoration, praise, confession, and thanksgiving.”<sup>5</sup> W.E. Vine defines the Hebrew word for pray:

The Hebrew word for *pray* is *palal*, “to pray, intervene, mediate, judge. In the intensive form *palal* expresses the idea of ‘to mediate, to come between two parties.’” “The first occurrence of *palal* in the Old Testament is in Genesis 20:7, where the reflexive or reciprocal form of the verb expresses the idea of ‘interceding for, prayer in behalf of.’” The Hebrew word for *prayer* is the noun *tepillah* meaning “to ‘make a request,’ which when referring to asking God is translated ‘prayer,’ 1 Kings 8:28.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Anonymous.

<sup>5</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), s.v. “prayer.”

<sup>6</sup> W.E. Vines, *Vine’s Concise Dictionary of Bible Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), s.v. “pray and prayer.”

*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* defines prayer terminology:

The Old Testament terminology for prayer is a rich vocabulary. ‘*Ātar* specifically means “entreat.” *Qārā* (+ *l<sup>e</sup>*, ‘el, “to”) is translated variously, e.g., “call,” “call (upon),” “cry (unto).” Typical uses are in Ps. 89:26 (MT 27); 119:146; 130:1; 141:1. *Sā’āq* means “cry out,” usually for help (e.g., Ex. 17:4; Ps. 107:6, 28; Isa. 46:7; cf. the related noun *sā’āqā*, “cry,” Ex. 3:7). *Zā’āq* also means “cry out,” but it is used less often than *sā’āq* (e.g., cry for help, Jgs. 6:6; “cry,” v.7; “call,” Lam. 3:8). *Sāwa’* means cry out in an intense manner, e.g., “call,” Ps. 72:12; “cry for help,” “Lam. 3:8; Hab. 1:2. The noun *rinnā* describes a ringing cry, as in Ps. 17:1. Two frequently-used verbs are usually translated “seek”: *dāras* (e.g., 1 Ch. 16:11a; 2 Ch. 15:2, 12f.; Ps. 105:4a; “search,” Dt. 4:29b) and *bāqas* (e.g., Dt. 4:29a; 1Ch. 16:11b; Ps. 27:8; 105:3, 4b). *Dāras* is often translated “inquire.” Another verb signifying inquiry of *sā’al*, often translated “ask” (e.g., Ps. 105:40), sometimes “inquire” (e.g., 1 S. 23:2), and in Ps 122:6 “pray.” The verb *hānan* “be gracious,” “pity,” is used in the hithpael to mean “beseech” or “implore” (e.g., Dt. 3:23). Several verbs convey the idea of waiting on, or for, God: *hākā* (e.g., Ps. 33:20; Isa. 8:17); *hīl* (e.g., Ps. 37:7); *yāhal* (e.g., Mic. 7:7); *qāwā* (e.g., Ps 25:3, 5; 27:14; 37:9, 34; 40:1 [MT 2]; 130:5; Isa. 40:31; “hope,” Ps. 69:6 [MT 7]; *sābar* (e.g., “hope,” Ps 119:166; Isa. 38:18).<sup>7</sup>

Carpenter and Comfort add from the New Testament,

In the New Testament, Christian *prayer* is defined as “rooted, objectively, in Christ’s intercession; subjectively, in the enabling of the Holy Spirit. The church is a kingdom of priests, offering spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving (Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5), but Christ is the great High Priest. Nowhere in Scripture is it suggested that there is any other mediator between God and people except Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). Nowhere in either the Old Testament or New Testament is there any encouragement to pray to individuals other than God. Thus, the church is encouraged to come to God boldly in prayer, receive God’s mercy through Jesus Christ, and be reassured that grace will be provided when it is needed (Heb. 4:14–16; 9:24; 10:19–23).<sup>8</sup>

W.E. Vine adds from the New Testament the analysis of the words,

The two Greek verbs: (1) *euchomai* means “to pray (to God),” is used with this meaning in 2 Cor. 13:7; v. 9, RV, ‘pray’ (KJV, ‘wish’); Jas. 5:16; 3 John 2, RV, ‘pray’ (KJV, wish). Even when the RV and KJV translated by ‘I would’ Acts 26:29, or ‘wished for,’ Acts 27:29 (RV, marg., ‘could pray’), the indication is that ‘prayer’ is involved.” (2) The second, *proseuchomai* meaning “to pray,” is always used of ‘prayer’ to God, and is the most frequent word in this respect, especially in the

<sup>7</sup> *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. “prayer.”

<sup>8</sup> E.E. Carpenter, and P.W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew words defined and explained* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), s.v. “prayer.”

Synoptists and Acts, once in Romans 8:26; in Ephesians 6:18, in Philippians 1:9; in 1 Timothy 2:8; in Hebrews 13:18; in Jude 20. For the injunction in 1 Thess. 5:17.”<sup>9</sup>

### A Theology of Prayer Agreement

Alan Richardson in *A Dictionary of Christian Theology* under “The Theology of Prayer” defined prayer from Old Testament Israel to the New Testament Church as follows:

1. Prayer was spontaneous, natural and unaffected. The Israelite, whether individually or corporately, poured out all his concern to God—for his safety, his harvest, his sins and failures, his joys and sorrows his thanksgiving and praise.
2. God was essentially ‘Thou’, the one who called forth the response of those who knew his name, and while the OT is certainly familiar with the idea of God as Father of Israel, his ‘son’ (cf. Hos. 11:1), the prayer of Jesus introduces a distinctively personal relationship...his use of an intimate family-address, *Abba*, ‘daddy.’
3. Jesus and his disciples inherited this long and rich tradition of personal approach to God, and the NT requires and indeed assumes that Christians will pray without ceasing...‘in the name of Jesus.’
4. Christian prayer...contains only those petitions which can be genuinely offered in the name (character, spirit) of Christ, the same Christ who ‘at the right hand of God’ makes intercession for us.
5. The essence of prayer is not asking but offering, not self-seeking but self-dedication: ‘not my will but thine be done.’
6. We are not to worry about our own food and clothing. Our prayer should be concerned with God’s kingdom of righteousness: with those who suffer from injustice, deprivation, disease, violence. (Prayer is) not merely to speak to him and then leave him to do everything; he desires (our) active cooperation.
7. Christian prayer is possible only if we believe in the God whom Jesus called Father... (and) only where Jesus’ own utter trust in the loving Father is present.
8. Christian prayer is always corporate in character, even when we enter into our private chamber to pray...it is the Church, in heaven and on earth, praying through us. We cannot enter alone into the presence of ‘our’ Father; God is ‘my’ God only because he is the God of my fellow-men, and therefore my concerns are his concerns and vice-versa.<sup>10</sup>

Richardson’s defining assessment of the theology of prayer is excellent. Prayer is not rote, repetitious, or a recitation of something memorized. It is from the heart (OT), and Jesus adds the personal, intimate family address, “*Abba*,” or ‘daddy.’ To pray in Jesus’ name is to

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<sup>9</sup> W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Concise Dictionary*, s.v. “pray.”

<sup>10</sup> Alan Richardson, ed., *A Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1969), s.v. “The Theology of Prayer.”

follow his giving, serving spirit. Prayer is not just for our needs but for God's kingdom of righteousness becoming a reality in the world through justice, equity, health, and peace.

Prayer is not just talking to God but taking an active participation in the work (e.g. praying like it's all God and working like it's all you). Christian prayer is not possible without faith, and it is always corporate in character. There is an underlying agreement in the 'our,' the 'we,' and the 'us.'

### Types of Prayer

Christian prayer mores reveal several types of prayers. All prayer is not the same.<sup>11</sup>

First, there is the *prayer of exaltation* where the name(s) of the Lord is (are) praised. This prayer is connected to worship with its primary focus being to recognize with adoration who God is (e.g., Psalm 103:1-2). Worship prayer, when it is done by true worshipers "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24), results in faith benefits (Psalm 103:2-5). In worship prayer, believers run in faith into the refuge of the meanings of God's names and find safety (Proverbs 18:10).

Second, there's the *prayer of thanksgiving* where the believer participates in the other side of worship prayer, thanking God for what He has done and is doing (Psalm 100:4; 105:1; 106:1).

Third, there's the *sinner's prayer* where the object of this communion with God is repentance and faith, the receiving of forgiveness, and the assurance of salvation (Psalm 51; Matthew 4:17; Romans 10:13).

Fourth, there's the *prayer of petition* where believers request in faith what God has promised in the Word of His will for you (Philippians 4:6-7; 1 John 5:14-15). The *prayer of faith* mentioned in James 5:15 is a prayer of petition for the will of God in healing to

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<sup>11</sup> We will examine later the kind of begging, faithless praying that must change in order for the dominion of the kingdom of God to be established in faith.

manifest. The *prayer for deliverance* is also a prayer of petition for the will of God in deliverance from demonic or worldly bondage to manifest. Jesus said that some deliverance from demonic influence only happens through prayer (Mark 9:29; some manuscripts “prayer and fasting”). In the process, it does become necessary to rebuke and bind the demonic spirit(s) in the name of Jesus (Mark 1:24-26; Luke 10:17; Acts 16:18). And while deliverance may not seem like prayer, it is a form of *warfare prayer*, a subset of the prayer of petition, where believers, in the power of the Holy Spirit, armed with the Word of God and the name of Jesus, confront the powers of darkness and petition God to enable the captive to be set free.

Fifth, there’s the *prayer of intercession* where, in faith, a believer stands in between God and another person and prays. The believer is being a spiritual priest in this function of representing the needs of another person in prayer to God. He or she must qualify to stand in that holy place (Psalm 24:3-4; Matthew 7:3-5).

Finally, there’s the *prayer of confession* where the believer speaks in faith that which the Word says about who he is, what he has, and what he can do. This prayer is a part of holding firm to a confession of faith without wavering as he remembers God is faithful (Hebrews 10:23; 1 Timothy 6:12).

### **The Local Church: A “House of Prayer”**

Is the Church of Jesus Christ supposed to be a “House of Prayer”? Have we missed our true calling in abandoning one of our primary callings? The study of the Church is called Ecclesiology. In the reference *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* the origin of the words translated “church” is explained:

#### *A. Kuriakon.*

The English word “church” is derived from the word *kuriakon* which means “belonging to the Lord,” a word which is never applied to the Church in the New Testament period; although it is found twice in the New Testament as an adjective

applying to The Lord’s Supper and to the Lord’s Day (1 Cor. 11:20; Rv. 1:10). In post-apostolic times the Greeks used the term *kuriakon* to designate the church building. The evolution of the Greek *kuriakon* to the English word “church” can be seen in the Scottish work “kirk”. The only words in the New Testament used to designate a building as a place of worship are temple and synagogue (Acts 5:42; Jas. 2:2, RV).

B. *Ekklesia*.

In the English New Testament the word “church” is used invariably to translate the Greek word *ekklesia* (Mt. 16:18; 18:17; Acts 2:47; 9:31; 13:1; 14:23; 15:22; 16:5; 20:17, 28; Rom. 16:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 5:23–29; Col. 1:18; Rv. 1:4, 11). The word *ekklesia* means “an assembly of people.” The term is derived from two Greek words, *ek* meaning “out from,” and *kaleo* which means “to call.” Originally, “the ones called out” had reference to the legislative body of citizens of the Greek republic called from their communities to serve the country. When we refer to a session of the State “Assembly,” we are using the word “assembly” in exactly the same way the Greeks used the term *ekklesia*.

By New Testament times, when Jesus employed the word *ekklesia* to designate the body He would build, the word borrowed meaning from at least two sources: (1) the Jewish use of the word in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) where it referred to the “congregation” of Israel, and (2) the Greek employment of the word to refer to any assembly of people, whether a constituted body or an unorganized mob. An example of the Jewish use is found in Acts 7:37, 38: “This is that Moses, … that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.” The Jewish use of the word *ekklesia*, usually translates the Hebrew word *quahal* which was the Old Testament word for the congregation of Israel in the wilderness.<sup>12</sup>

**Leadership in the Church is Spiritual not Political**

Does my church polity affect my view of the pastoral Leader and potentially influence the agreement our church may have? The Early Church recognized that leadership is God-given: “(3) diligence was given to the appointment of proper leadership (Acts 1:23–

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<sup>12</sup> G.P. Duffield, and N. M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 419-420.

26; 14:23; Ti. 1:5); (4) qualifications for elders (bishops) and deacons are set forth in some detail (1 Tm. 3:1–13; Ti. 1:5–9; 1 Tm. 5:1, 17–22; 1 Pt. 5:1–4; Acts 6:1–7; 20:28–35).”<sup>13</sup>

Leaders are gifts from Christ with abilities given commensurate to the office they hold. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesian church, declared a remarkable truth concerning the spiritual leaders in the body of Christ:

But to each one of us GRACE was given according to the measure of Christ’s GIFT. Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives and He gave GIFTS to men.”...And He GAVE some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists; and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-12, NASB, emphasis mine)

Duffield and Van Cleave consider this matter of people as gifts to the Body of Christ and how they are chosen:

The remarkable truth was that spiritual offices in the Church were to be thought of as gifts from Christ to His body. Therefore, men cannot make themselves leaders, nor can they be made such by the whim of others (Romans 1:5; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1, 16). The Church must set apart, as spiritual leaders and ministers, those whom God has called and chosen (Acts 13:1–3); because, when Christ gives a man to the Body of Christ, He first endows the man with a spiritual gift that corresponds to his office.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, the pastoral Leader must be prayed in not just voted on. Even if the church polity is congregational or democratic, the vote for a spiritual Leader must be bathed in prayer recognizing the anointing to pastor comes down from God and cannot be conjured up from the people by a popularity vote. Praying to establish loving agreement in the church, agreement fostering the mission of evangelism, follow-up, and discipleship at home and abroad, is more faith-filled if the people believe their pastor.

### **Does Theology Matter?**

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<sup>13</sup> Duffield and Van Cleave, *Foundations*, 424.

<sup>14</sup> Duffield and Van Cleave, *Foundations*, 347.

Does your theological perspective, what you believe, affect your prayer life? Prayer is a labor of faithfulness and faith. It's a labor of faithfulness because your consistent walk can influence your confidence in prayer. Though we all are human and imperfect, yet you can discipline yourself to deny ungodliness and worldly attractions; you can gain the wisdom from faithfully searching the Scriptures and praying. This will result in you experiencing that which occurs in the lives of those who are mature in Christ.

Discipline may be difficult, but it is not impossible. Your determination to overcome will make the difference. While it may not be plausible to discipline every major area of your life all at once (Spiritual, Physical, Relational, and Financial), your concentration on one or more areas cannot be to the exclusion of the others. The goal of discipline, of course, is to achieve a balance that reflects your faithfulness resulting in answered prayer.

Prayer is a labor of faith because you must believe to receive. Without faith you cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). Believing-faith is imperative. For you to see prayer as a labor of faith requires looking at your theology. Certainly, what you believe theologically about what the Bible teaches will affect your prayer life. For example, if you believe the sovereignty of God means God has arbitrarily predetermined who will be saved and who will be lost, that belief has the potential of hindering your praying in faith for a person's salvation. Praying in faith for the salvation of a lost person will require a theology that believes anyone can be saved.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PRAYER AGREEMENT: A STRATEGY FOR MULTIGENERATIONAL CHURCH HEALTH AND GROWTH

#### **Purpose of this Study**

Being a city-boy, I understand there's a city perspective in my experiential research and understanding. My opinion that the lack of prayer agreement is one of the primary reasons for unhealthy non-growing churches is one that other Christian leaders are also recognizing.<sup>1</sup> The statistics paint a dismal picture of the health and growth of the major Christian denominational churches (Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Methodist). Doug Hall portrays with passion the overwhelming needs of inner city-dwellers caught in the struggle to survive and the visionless churches surrounding them:

All around us were decaying, historic church buildings where mere handfuls of discouraged older believers met. There seemed to be little spiritual vitality anywhere. Too many churches were trying desperately to survive and had long since lost a vision for either evangelism or social responsibility. Paying the heating bill was often the most pressing issue the deacons faced...Just outside the doors of these churches was a city with monumental needs, characterized by poverty, drugs and alcohol, crime, racial tension, inadequate housing, and hopelessness. Churches seemed impotent to help. Where was the church of the New Testament? Where was Jesus? Had He altogether deserted Boston?<sup>2</sup>

I would add, where is the praying church? Where is the agreement with the Word? Where is the spirit of agreement within the average local church needed to stand with united authority and strength against the Enemy in order to do what has been commissioned?

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<sup>1</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Churchquake: How the New Apostolic Reformation is Shaking Up the Church as We Know It* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), 51-52. He lists nine salient characteristics of the New Apostolic Reformation: (1) New name; (2) New authority structure; (3) New leadership training; (4) New ministry focus; (5) New worship style; (6) New prayer forms; (7) New financing; (8) New outreach; and (9) New power priorities. Notice the presence of numbers 2, 5, and 6.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas A. Hall, *The Cat & the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010), 35.

My purpose for this study is to succinctly outline and strategize the “how to’s” of getting from here to there: “here” being the normal local church with a full-time senior pastor who desires to effectively minister to his people and see that local church effect change in their community, and “there” being the creation of a praying church; a church that can legitimately be called “a house of prayer for all nations” for the purpose of being a loving, caring, evangelistic church; one without walls, a people called by God’s name out of worldly behavior who use the resources of the kingdom to lift the lost, rescue the perishing, care for the dying, and in the name of Jesus provide hope.

Our focus is for the Body of Christ to develop the desire and discipline to *pray* and the trust and structural integrity to *agree*. These two pillar-truths speak to the need our divided, confused world has—a praying, power filled, united Church.<sup>3</sup>

We will examine the biblical teaching on prayer and agreement to discern effective patterns and principles. This examination will include the exegesis of major passages with the intent to ascertain the principles of faith and godly character out of which those successful Old and New Testament prayer warriors operated. Similarly, we will examine the truth of agreement as it is taught in the Old and New Testaments. We will look at the underlying principles governing what agreement is and how it functioned in biblical history. In this regard, we will ask and answer three basic questions about agreement: What is agreement? Why is agreement important? and How is agreement achieved? Throughout the study, I will document my findings from the Scriptures, from written resource materials, from current and not-so-current examples in the world of the

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<sup>3</sup> Remember Jesus taught a house divided will come to ruin (Matthew 12:25). For the Church to discontinue being a joke to the world, the truth and power of prayer and agreement must be preached, practiced, and released.

church, and from my own experience as the founding, senior pastor of Jubilee Christian Church.

### **Overview of the Study**

There are numerous factors contributing to the unhealthy, non-growing condition of many churches: sinful clergypersons, carnal leadership, an ecclesiology allowing unsaved membership, unprepared and visionless leaders, non-biblical legalistic dogma, a reputation of irrelevance, and uninviting facilities. We will focus on the absence of prayer.

#### **The Absence of Prayer**

An intimate, personal, vertical relationship with God where He communes with leaders and empowers them with vision and wisdom to build His kingdom in the hearts of people is missing. Also missing is the individual prayer power of believers covering their leaders, one another, and their community in prayer.

#### *A Beginning Prayer Movement*

We will examine the most recent Prayer Movement in the Boston Area. This movement began quietly as believers saw the need to pray in small groups for themselves and their surroundings, and it has grown to an organized prayer intensive reaping great results.

#### *Understanding Some Prayer Mechanics*

We will examine some prayer fundamentals. For example, we will consider faith and how faith works. We will look at the importance of a godly life as it influences confidence and boldness. We will ask the important questions, What of God's will? What is your purpose for asking God for that? Is your motive a kingdom motive or a selfish motive?

### *A Theology of Prayer*

The majority of the space will be given to the examination of specific prayer passages in the Old and New Testaments.

### *A Practical Strategy*

Finally, we will examine a practical vision strategy for mobilizing prayer agreement. It will take your best effort to pray with others consistently. The greatest fight the Enemy makes is against those who pray. He fights pastors, prophets, apostles, evangelists, teachers, and every kind of witness minister when they are about the Father's business in their area, but their greatest fight comes on their knees. We will outline practical "how to's" that have proven successful.

## **An Absence of Prayer Agreement**

### Introduction

There is a difference between understanding something intellectually and experientially. The difference is the absence of impartation. More is caught than is taught. You can explain how something is done because you've read some books and are conversant in the results of studies done and have read the analyzed data, but to impart the hunger that facilitates change and growth will take a passion and depth of understanding from experience that the teacher in his ivory tower does not possess. God allows events, occasions, problems, and even hardships to occur in your life to move you to pray in order for you to have a real experience with Him. The older saints used to say, "God does one thing to do another." The role of prayer in all of this is to keep you sensitive to the voice and leadings of the Holy Spirit so you stay focused. R.R. Byrum, on the subject of prayer and that which is connected to supernatural providence, wrote,

Prayer must also be allowed a large place in connection with supernatural providence. Deists and all who deny God's personality recognize no objective value of prayer. But the impulse to pray is deeply implanted in the race, and there is implied in it an expectation of answers to prayer. The Scriptures clearly teach that God answers prayer...(Philippians 4:6; Mark. 11:24). And not only does the Bible furnish us with many such promises, but it also abounds with records of the fulfillment of them in definite answers to prayer. Fire fell...in response to a simple prayer by Elijah...when he prayed for rain the drought of three years and six months was ended promptly by a great rain. No grander privilege is offered to men than that of prayer. Nothing brings greater joy to the devout soul nor awakens in him a deeper love for God than to experience a definite answer to his own believing petition. Such answers to prayer are the most impressive of all providential manifestations.<sup>4</sup>

The saints would also say, "If you don't pray, you won't stay; and if you don't fast, you won't last." The experience of being a prayer warrior cannot be supplanted by other gifts, intellectual abilities, or pursuits.

Finally, as a Leader you will not succeed in inspiring others to do what you don't. A praying pastor or pastoral leader can produce praying people. Followers will say, "If it's important enough for the Leader, it must be that important."

#### *What You Don't Know Can Hurt*

Do not assume you know how to pray effectively. The world can be divided into four knowledge groupings: (1) Those who know and know they know; (2) Those who know, but don't know they know; (3) Those who don't know and know they don't know; and (4) Those who don't know but don't know they don't know. I assessed I was in group three with respect to effectual fervent prayer, what some might call "praying through."

The first group, those who know and know they know, is true of everyone in different categories. I know how to drive a car and if asked, my affirmative response would not be interpreted as pride or bragging.

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<sup>4</sup> Russell R. Byrum, *Christian Theology* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1925), 259-260.

The second group, those who know, but don't know they know, is also true of many. True story: a pastor's wife went into the garage to speak to her husband and found him gasping for breath, pinned under their car as it had slipped off the jack and was lying on his chest. She didn't have time to run into the house, call 911 and wait for an emergency crew to come rescue her husband, but with adrenaline pumping, she grabbed the axle spindle and lifted the car enough for her husband to crawl out from under it to safety. Had she been asked beforehand, "Are you strong enough to lift a car?" she would have immediately responded in the negative, but she had an ability she did not know she had.

The third group, those who don't know and know they don't know, covers many. I don't know the latest IRS tax laws and I know I don't know, so I hire a CPA to assist me in filing my annual income tax forms.

The fourth group, those who don't know but don't know they don't know, is the most unfortunate of the four, because many, when questioned about their knowledge of a particular subject respond in the affirmative. They actually think they know what they don't know, and many within Christian circles fall into this group with prayer.

#### *Prayer Time Is not Wasted Time*

Many in the church, even leaders, do not value having a prayer time: a time where they get away from the daily spiritual or secular routine to be alone with God. I was privileged to attend a Church Growth Conference at a church in Virginia in 1985. Three resource persons were advertised to be our teachers: Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho, Dr. Robert Schuller, and Dr. Samuel G. Hines. I was familiar with all three. I'd read Dr. Cho's book *The Fourth Dimension*, I'd seen Dr. Schuller on television, and I knew Dr. Hines personally. I remember Dr. Cho, pastor at that time of the largest church in the world,

being asked, “How do you have the time to pray three to five hours daily?” His prodigious response was, “If I did not pray, I would not have time to pray.” Prayer empowers you to solve problems even before they surface. Prayer creates an atmosphere of understanding and commitment enabling solutions to be readily available. Prayer releases resources that would not have surfaced apart from God’s intervention.

Remember Jesus is the One with the Key of David. Revelation 3:7-8 states, “These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.”

I remember hearing God’s voice during one of my prayer times, “Son, when you pray, you open a door for Me to work behind the scenes in your life.” As you can imagine, I rejoiced at this revelation knowing it would pull me into being more prayerful around issues confronting me, members of my family, leaders and members in my church, etc. In the midst of my rejoicing I heard Him speak again, “And when you don’t pray, you open a door for the Enemy to work behind the scenes in your life.” Frankly, that was a scary thought for me. I’ve not always been a prayer warrior. There were those seasons when I was trying to get to a level of prayer consistency and proficiency and much of my prayer time was spent crying out of my failure rather than establishing in faith the dominion of His kingdom by the authority of His Word. Prayers prayed from a position of weakness and guilt are different than prayers prayed from a position of victory and strength. I’ve wondered since then how much my life has been influenced by my own prayerlessness. How has my lack of faithfulness in this all-important area opened a door for the Enemy to work behind the scenes in *my* life? The Lord ended this encounter by saying, “It is up to you which door you want opened.” It will take eternity to see

where we might have been had we only recognized the value of prayer and its ability to access the power and wisdom of God for ourselves and others.

*Unsaved or Carnal Leaders*

It is no secret that carnal, worldly-minded people, some who have absolutely no intention of surrendering their lives to the lordship of Christ, join churches and are often elected to positions of power and influence in church affairs. Some churches are ruled by a family headed by a vindictive, domineering matriarch that views the church as an extension of her family, and nothing takes place without her knowledge and sanction. The choir in most city churches is known as the “war department.” Battles between the committed Christians and the unsaved members of the local church are common, but should not exist if a measurable commitment to Christ was the yardstick for church membership.

A pastor in a major city had a fire in his church. It burned a significant part of his fellowship hall building. The attached sanctuary, a building with a seating capacity of about 350 was untouched by the fire. The insurance paid the church almost one million dollars. The pastor’s vision to grow the church was actually hindered by the building’s inadequacies: no parking space, little to no children’s space, no Sunday school rooms, and no administrative office space. The fellowship hall at least offered makeshift space, but the fire destroyed that possibility. The pastor, an educated man with an earned doctorate degree contracted an appraiser to evaluate the worth of their sanctuary without the fellowship hall as well as with the fellowship hall rebuilt. After examination, the appraiser valued the sanctuary to be worth about \$450,000 and if the fellowship hall was still there, he said it would add another 50 to 100 thousand dollars to the value. The

almost one million dollars from the insurance was invested wisely by a member of the church who was a broker at Merrill Lynch.

The pastor then called a reputable construction company to estimate how much it would cost to replace the fellowship hall. The estimate came back about 1.25 million dollars. The pastor thought to himself, why spend more money than we have, going into debt to restore the fellowship hall when it did not meet the needs of the growing church before the fire? And why spend over a million dollars to increase the worth of the property by only 50 to 100 thousand dollars? He concluded the wisest thing would be to spend as little money as possible cleaning up the fire-damaged fellowship hall, sell the church property for 450K, then take the insurance money and the 450K and look for a church facility that adequately met the needs of their growing church.

The pastor then met with his trustee board, shared with them all of his findings, and recommended the church look for a more adequate facility to accommodate their growing ministry. The insurance money plus whatever they received from the sale of their old facility would more than provide for the purchase of a church facility that could meet their growing ministry needs. The pastor removed himself from the meeting to give the trustees some alone time to discuss his proposal. When they called him to return, they thanked him for his research and proposal, but the head trustee, a church boss in the fullest meaning of that term, said, "Pastor, the other night I had a dream, and in that dream the Lord spoke to me that the church was to remain in this facility." The trustee board chose to follow the so-called "dream" of a trustee in opposition to the Leader, their pastor. The pastor thanked them and within a few weeks he resigned the church and went looking for some space to rent to start all over again. The church he and his wife started after resigning became one of the largest churches in their city. The church from which

he resigned spent all of the insurance money to partially restore the fellowship hall. They are now in debt and struggling to survive. Solomon prophesied their condition in Proverbs 29:18, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

The absence of vision or revelation is detrimental, and having fearful, shortsighted leaders with authority can also hinder the church’s progress. As long as the vision and direction of the local church is in the hands of a group of carnal, non-praying leaders who may be deacons, trustees, or church council members, that church may be headed to failure. When they exercise authority outside of their station and hinder the vision and direction God gives to the pastor who is the spiritual Leader, the health and growth of that local church body may be in jeopardy.

Ostensibly, a major part of the problem is a church polity that allows anyone who is articulate enough to make a motion and argue a position to exert influence on the voters and hold sway on the floor through Roberts Rules of Order. Some church bosses of long standing have even met with their cohorts prior to the meeting in an attempt to marshal their troops. In this way, some power-hungry church bosses who may not even know Christ and who certainly are not prayer warriors often thwart the vision and direction God gives to godly Leaders.

A small handful of articulate leaders can easily unite to stop a pastor’s vision dead in its tracks. Had the current system of government in most churches been in place in Israel under Moses, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram would probably have succeeded in leading Israel back to Egypt.

### *A House Divided*

In the economy of God, division is detrimental; division is an enemy. Unity and agreement must become the unwritten but fully understood underpinnings of the house. Jesus does not mince words in His condemnation of division in Matthew 12:25-26: “But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?’”

Agreement dispels destruction. Jesus said a house divided against itself cannot stand. The need to see what real agreement can accomplish is universal, but we will not get there without God’s help.

### *Christian Unity*

While we understand our Lord prayed for unity in His Church (John 17:20-23), the Church is not consistently diligent about addressing those areas that divide us with a mind toward reconciliation. Unity many times is a product of forgiveness, and broken relationships and divisions are oftentimes the product of a lack of forgiveness. But forgiving, though difficult at times, is not impossible, especially if you remind yourself (1) you are forgiven; and (2) the benefit of being forgiven is connected to you forgiving (Matthew 6:14-15). Your willingness to forgive is not an option; not if you are genuinely Christian and understand you are forgiven. And there is no way you can really go to the Father in prayer while circumventing reconciliation with your brother (Matthew 5:24-25).

### **Prayer Mobilization**

The determination to be a House of Prayer came from a word received in prayer. God said, “Build an army of prayer warriors.” For years as the senior pastor I became a

prayer drum-major, the one responsible for encouraging and rallying the congregation-troops to pray. Over the past 26-plus years (we began Early Morning Prayer in 1986), we have witnessed the crowds dwindle to only a handful of prayer warrior stalwarts (50-100) who still consistently come. Some of the responsibility for the dwindling can be laid at the feet of leaders too busy to pray in EMP. I'm confident these leaders are praying, but their absence in EMP causes followers to surmise, "If it is not important enough for them, it must not be that important." Leaders are to be out front leading by their presence in worship,<sup>5</sup> in prayer meetings, and in ministry gatherings.

The spiritual strategy for building an army of prayer warriors has been elevated from begging and trying to make folk feel guilty to organizing, training, and creating levels of accountability.

#### *Core Ministry Covering*

Every church has five groups of congregants: core, committed, congregation, crowd and community. In our church, we define each group this way:<sup>6</sup>

1. **Core** – those who, out of their godly character, are faithful in their attendance, work in ministry, and support the ministry with their time, talent, and tithe.
2. **Committed** – those who are members of the church, are faithful in their attendance, and support the ministry with their tithe.
3. **Congregation** – those who are members of the church, attend regularly, and support the ministry with their offerings.
4. **Crowd** – those who see themselves as members of the church who regularly attend only a few times a year (e.g. Easter, Mother's Day) where they may or may not give.

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<sup>5</sup> This practice of ministers lollygagging in the pastor's study during worship and only appearing when it is almost time for the preaching is actually teaching the people that worship is not that important. Unfortunately, then worship is viewed and treated as an appetizer and not part of the main course.

<sup>6</sup> I remember hearing the local church's membership outlined by core, committed, congregation, crowd, and community more than 30 years ago. I added the specific definitions.

5. **Community** – those who do not attend the church but who know about it because they know people who attend or they may have attended a wedding or a funeral at the church.

The strategy is simple: stop pushing those who are not serious members of the church to pray. Start by organizing, training, and mobilizing those who are core members. Place them in a DNA<sup>7</sup> group, pair them with a prayer partner, assign them to a particular day to attend EMP with their prayer partner, teach them the benefits of covering their partner in prayer daily and being covered, and teach them the benefits of fellowship and strengthening the Structure of Accountability (SA).

The strategy for involving the entire church is based upon the human proclivities of *envy* and *competition*. I'm trusting that the progress and prosperity of those covered in prayer and benefiting from the DNA group fellowship, agreement, and accountability will draw the committed, the congregation, and the crowd to move toward more faithful involvement.

I believe prayer is the misunderstood, missing link in the lack of multigenerational church health and growth today. Fervent, faith-filled prayer agreement creates an open heaven, an anointed atmosphere making it easier to understand truth and believe. Many testify to having witnessed the change believing prayer makes. They've said, "The presence of believing prayer elevated the power of the Word to penetrate sin-hardened hearts and change worldly adherents into submitted believers." It is no wonder the apostle Paul *prayed* for revelation knowledge for the Ephesians (1:18-19). With agreement in place, you are able to pray faith-filled prayers devoid of the doubts from doctrinal disputations. You are able to pray with an authority and power that cannot even be held hostage by numbers (Leviticus 26:8). According to the intercession of Abraham,

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<sup>7</sup> DNA stands for Developing, Nurturing, and Accountability.

just ten righteous people could have saved Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:22-33). No situation, however dire, is hopeless if you know how to pray.

### Teaching Prayer

The principles and procedures of warfare prayer and agreement must be taught. We mistakenly assume the average believer knows how to access the power of prayer and agreement, but the weak faith of the average believing church members and the contemporary history of dying local churches testify the church does not know how to pray or how to agree. The average local church is not a house of prayer or a people of agreement.

### *Mature Leaders*

God calls believers to pray and the spiritually mature respond in obedience. The Scriptures distinguish between mature and immature believers. The immature believers fall into two categories: (1) new converts or babes in Christ and (2) those who have been converted long enough to be teachers but still need to be taught.<sup>8</sup>

Maturity can be measured by actions that indicate the level of the believer's commitment. Some believers have almost no commitment whatsoever or their partial commitment is so minor it is difficult to measure. A sad commentary is even some gifted leaders lack real commitment to Christ,<sup>9</sup> and in the Court of Time where succeeding

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<sup>8</sup> There are several passages teaching these two categories. (1) There is 1 Peter 2:2, "*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation...*" These are babes, new believers in Christ who are not yet mature and need the milk of the Word to grow. (2) Then there is the rebuke of Paul of the carnal actions of the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:1-4) or the rebuke of the apostle of the Hebrews 5:11-12, "*We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food.*"

<sup>9</sup> There is something called "the tyranny of talent." It is where a ministry grows because of the personal talent and giftedness of the leader even though that leader lacks relationship with Christ, is unrepentant of sinful behavior, or is out of order with respect to honoring his fathers and disciplining his sons. In the tyranny of talent, the confronted leader feels justified in his chosen path thinking, "If something is wrong, then why am I so blessed?"

generations fair, history records little victory in multigenerational succession.<sup>10</sup> Though there are exceptions, Bible history and post-biblical salvation history testify you reap what you sow. There is usually no escaping the consequences of one who hides a profane, profligate lifestyle. I'm reminded of the words of Jesus who said, "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known" (Matthew 10:26). In other words, hidden garbage in your life will smell after a while; and as the old biblical adage goes, "Surely your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

The reason this is important in a discourse on prayer is the person who climbs a holy hill to stand in a holy place will not witness his prayers taking his church to a place of health and growth if his hands are not clean and his heart is not pure.<sup>11</sup> Prayer agreement cannot be treated like some formula, add two tablespoons and stir. No, if this is to work in transforming the perspective and growth potential of people, it must first be real in the life of their Leader. Transformation must begin in the Leader before he can transfer or impart it to his people. The first line of the song inspired by St. Francis of Assisi's prayer said, "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me." The passion for righteousness, peace, love, prayer, etc. must exist in the heart of the Leader. He cannot hope to bring his people where he is not. And so, at this very outset, the prayer of

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<sup>10</sup> History has recorded several ministries that made a significant impact during the lifetime of the founder and degenerated to a shadow of their former selves by failing to grow past the first generation. The absence of prevailing prayer, visionary servant-leadership that discipiles the next generation, and agreement give birth to the weak, uncommitted church members who fall away after the retirement or death of the leader. Thus the church does not survive the transition of leadership. The example of A.A. Allen and Miracle Valley, Arizona illustrate this.

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 24:3. This passage will be dealt with in depth later. It is used here to undergird the truth that God knows our hearts and though He will give us time to repent (Revelation. 2:21) the consequences of not judging ourselves and changing will negatively affect the future strength of the ministry to the next generation. Multigenerational strength does not come from wishful thinking, but from the Lord working in us and then through us. Some think that because the *through us* is working I don't need to consider my relationship with the Lord working *in* me. But our children mirror more of what they see than of what they hear. Multigenerational health in the church begins with leaders who have a real relationship with Christ that is kept up-to-date.

Leaders reading this thesis should be, “Lord, let this ministry of prayer agreement begin in me.”

### *Systematic Instruction*

The following is the meat of a seven-point outline (seven questions) for instruction in prayer warfare.

- I. What is prayer? In the process of teaching prayer effectiveness in seminars, I've outlined four definitions of prayer.
  - A. Prayer is talking to God, a monologue, the most basic understanding of prayer I've ever read.
  - B. Prayer is communing with God, a dialogue. This definition recognizes the truth that God is not silent; He speaks and you must prepare your heart to hear Him. Pray, therefore, with pen and journal in hand to record the leadings of the Spirit. Stop unbelief or being too busy to listen.
  - C. Prayer is warfare, where you recognize the presence of an Enemy positioned against you (John 10:10). You don the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18), and take your stand for righteousness in Christ (Matthew 6:33; 2 Corinthians 5:21). In this regard, you ask God in faith while you resist and rebuke the Enemy with authority.
  - D. Prayer is prophetic intercession. As Habakkuk did, you stand watch to look and see what God will say about who you are to be and what you are to do. You then pray and work toward that prophetic goal (Habakkuk 2:1-3) by faith (Habakkuk 2:4c).
- II. Why should you pray? The answer to this second question is in four parts.
  - A. Because Jesus prayed (Mark 1:35; 6:26; Luke 3:21; 6:12), you need to pray. He obviously did nothing that was unnecessary so if He had to pray, you have to pray. The prayer life of Jesus should be a constant incentive for you to discipline yourself to a greater commitment to prayer.
  - B. Because you are commanded to pray: the exhortations from Jesus (Luke 18:1) and from the apostle Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:17) leave you a biblical leg to stand on.
  - C. Because prayer changes you: prayer takes you into the presence of God where change takes place. Paul taught that the Spirit of the Lord changes you from glory to glory as you are in God's presence (2 Corinthians 3:18). The Greek word *metamorphoō*, translated “transformed” in English here, reminds you of the term “metamorphosis” used to define the process of a caterpillar changing into a butterfly (cf. Romans 12:2 where the same Greek word is used).
  - D. Because prayer empowers you in God's presence: the psalmist taught that the LORD is enthroned in our praise (Psalm 22:3, ESV). The Hebrew word translated “enthroned” appears in 2 Samuel 6:2, 2 Kings 19:15, 1 Chronicles 13:6, Isaiah 37:16, and Psalms 22:3, 55:19, 80:1, 99:1, 113:5,

and 123:1, all describing the superior position and implied power of God Almighty.<sup>12</sup>

III. What does prayer empower you to do? Here are three answers.

- A. Prayer empowers you to see, understand, and have vision (revelation) that's God-given. Without vision or revelation you perish (Proverbs 28:19). You probably won't perish in your lifetime (many even flourish during their lifetime due to their charismatic/personality gifts), but it is true—you will perish (your seed) if you do not have in place that which only comes from God by way of vision and revelation.
- B. Prayer empowers you to rebuke and bind the Enemy: Jesus taught you couldn't take (spoils) the Enemy's trophies (the souls of men) without first binding the strongman (Matthew 12:29, KJV). The *presence* of God, brought on by prayer, enables power over demonic principalities (Ephesians 6:10-18).
- C. Prayer empowers you to do the work of ministry: the psalmist taught that God shows you “the path of life” (Psalm 16:11). The Hebrew parallel says, “You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.” The joy and pleasure you experience in God’s presence, at His right hand is an enabling joy that strengthens you (Nehemiah 8:10) to do the work of the kingdom from your position in Christ (i.e. *at Your right hand*). Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 1:20), and you are in Christ (Ephesians 2:6). The work of ministry you are empowered to do is connected to fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

IV. What prayer basics do you need to know? Knowledge is key; without it you can be destroyed or without understanding you can come to ruin (Hosea 4:6, 14d). Four basics you need to know.

- A. The benefits of the *blood*, the *Name*, and the *Word*: you need to know and understand that your access into the presence of God was made possible by the **blood** of Christ (Hebrews 10:19) and not by your good deeds (Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:5).<sup>13</sup> You need to know and understand the anointed power of the **name** of Jesus Christ. His name has power in three realms: in heaven where God is, on earth where man is, and under the earth where demons are (Philippians 2:9-10). As a mature believer, you must remember to invoke the name of Jesus in prayer (John 16:24) and in demonic rebuke (Luke 10:17; Acts 16:18). Finally you need to know and understand the authority you have as you use the **Word** of God in prayer and in confession. Since God’s Word is eternal and stands firm in the heavens (Psalm 119:89), exalting the truth of the Word in prayer (Acts 4:23-31), in confession (Hebrews 10:23), and when dealing with demonic forces (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; cf. Ephesians 6:17b) provides a covering of authority you need to be effective in ministry.

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<sup>12</sup> Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, s.v. “enthroned.”

<sup>13</sup> The paradox is that unclean behavior can preclude your access into God’s presence, but holy behavior does not gain you access. Only faith in the blood gains you access into God’s presence. You must recognize the only way to God is Christ (John 14:6).

- B. The necessity of faith: you must recognize that without faith you can do nothing (Hebrews 11:6). You must know what faith is and how faith works.<sup>14</sup>
- C. The truth of who you are in Christ: this speaks of how absolutely necessary it is for you to know the truth of what God's Word says about you. Knowing that truth is liberating (John 8:31-32), and when that knowledge includes your position in Christ (Ephesians 1:18-19) it empowers you with an authority that facilitates effective prayer and ministry.
- D. The ministry of the Holy Spirit: you must come to a place of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, being cognizant that you desperately need Him in every area of your life and ministry. Welcome, acknowledge, and commune with the Spirit; hear His wise counsel and instruction (John 14:26), follow His leading (Romans 8:14), and wait for His enabling (Acts 1:4-8). See the Holy Spirit as One called alongside of you (Gk. *parakletos*), as your unseen partner in ministry, and determine to do nothing without Him (Luke 24:49).

V. Who is qualified? There are four answers to this important question concerning qualifications necessary for effective ministry: Those qualified are:

- A. Committed. You must make a total commitment of your life to the lordship of Jesus Christ to even begin (Romans 10:9; cf. the opposite of being qualified, Acts 19:13-16).
- B. Word-based and faith-filled. This means your knowledge of the Word assists in qualifying you for works of service. Remember faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17).
  - 1. The written Word strengthens your understanding of your position in Christ (Ephesians 2:4-7; 1:19-21).
  - 2. A spoken word can strengthen your faith as you move toward a God-given goal (Habakkuk 2:2-3; Romans 10:17; e.g. Acts 18:9-10).
  - 3. Understanding how faith works: the necessity of agreement (2 Corinthians 1:20), the fact that promises have conditions (Romans 8:28), the necessity of patience to see results (Hebrews 10:36; James 1:2-4), and the need not to confuse faith with foolishness or presumption.<sup>15</sup>
- C. Submitted to the will of God. Somehow, there has developed distance between receiving Jesus as Lord and submitting to His will for your life. There should not be any distance, but in the real Christian world, there sometimes is. Some do their own thing and hope it is okay with God. Submission to the will of God is key with respect to prayer confidence (1 John 5:14-15). Connected to vertical submission to God is horizontal submission to delegated authority (Hebrews 10:7, 17; cf. Matthew 8:5-13).

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<sup>14</sup> A more in-depth discussion of faith is in chapter four.

<sup>15</sup> Faith is believing God to fulfill a promise; foolishness is believing God to fulfill what you want apart from a promise; and presumption is believing God to fulfill a promise for which you do not qualify. With respect to presumption remember, "You cannot demand by promise what you deny by principle."

The will of God is simply doing works of service in building the truth of the kingdom of God in the hearts of others through evangelism, follow-up, and discipleship. Giving of yourself in this way as a kingdom-of-God-minded person is what it means to be sanctified (John 17:14-19), a mature believer who is a “sent one” (John 20:21).

D. Teaching priests. You qualify as one who is a worshiper (1 Peter 2:5, 9), and a prayer warrior (Ephesians 6:10-18) who can build, by teaching, a wall of truth around others you know and stand before God on their behalf (Ezekiel 22:30).

VI. What is your assignment? Your assignment is threefold.

- A. Be what you preach and pray about: Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they were “called to *be* saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2, KJV, emphasis mine). You are called to *be*: holy, loving, forgiving, and caring. In a divided world, the church needs to be a place of unity, a place where reconciliation is preached and practiced, and where the power of agreement is experienced.
- B. Establish the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33) in every sphere of your influence: spiritual, physical, relational, and financial. This will take the greatest determination of personal discipline and faithful stewardship over your life (1 Corinthians 4:2, KJV).
- C. To partner in prayer and accountability to see transformation become a reality in your area through the personal demolition of demonic strongholds, community repentance of sins against society, and the corporate church confrontation and unseating of demonic principalities.<sup>16</sup>

VII. How do you begin? The answer to this practical question is in five parts.

- A. Set a time: by making an appointment with God. If possible, start your day with your prayer time with God (Mark. 1:35). Remove distractions or possible interruptions, like the telephone, and cut off the television, radio, or any other competing equipment.
- B. Sanctify a place: by setting apart a corner, a room, an area in your home or apartment as your place to pray and study the Word. It can be outside of your dwelling. When Jesus was in the Jerusalem area, He prayed in a garden called Gethsemane.
- C. Select a pattern: learn by consistent use a pattern of prayer that you can employ from memory while in your prayer closet.
- D. Strengthen your prayer power with a partner: one of the prayer patterns is Agreement Praying,<sup>17</sup> where you sit in tandem with a partner to pray in agreement for specific needs (Matthew 18:19; Deuteronomy 32:30).

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<sup>16</sup> George Otis, Jr., *Informed Intercession* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1999) is a book about transforming communities through an intercessory prayer strategy that takes historical research and objective information gathering and combines it with Spirit-led insights. Spiritual mapping is another way to describe the basics of praying strategically for your community. It’s the practice of discerning through prayerful research the sins, injustices, etc. that took place in an area and that continue to impede the spiritual life of that area; and “strategic prayer,” is where mature believers seek to dislodge the demonic principality over that area through strategic prayer that includes repentance and reconciliation where needed.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Appendix D: Agreement Praying.

E. Seek the help of the Holy Spirit: by recognizing your need of His assistance in worship (John 4:23-24) and in prayer (Romans 8:26). As you acknowledge and welcome His wisdom and guidance in your time of intercession, you will develop a more intimate relationship with the Spirit that will strengthen your ministry in other areas of health and growth. Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho, mentioned earlier, is known for his testimony of how dependent he is on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In a section of his book entitled *The Communion of the Holy Spirit*, Dr. Cho emphasizes our need to fellowship intimately with the Holy Spirit and make Him our partner in the all-important work of evangelism by worshiping and acknowledging our dependence upon Him.<sup>18</sup>

### **Building Blocks to a Theology of Prayer: Influential Passages**

#### **2 Chronicles 7:14**

If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

The text begins with God speaking through the prophet to His people. God calls them “My people,” a statement of ownership. He further specifies that His people are those “who are called by My name.”<sup>19</sup> In this passage God’s people are given the option of submitting to the admonition to do three basic spiritual disciplines,

1. Humble yourself.
2. Pray and seek God’s face.
3. Turn from your wicked ways.

in order to experience three desperately needed benefits,

1. God will hear your prayer.
2. He will forgive your sin.
3. He will heal your land.

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<sup>18</sup> David Yonggi Cho, *The Holy Spirit: My Senior Partner* (Altamonte Springs, FL: Creation House, 1989), 17-33.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Isaiah 43:1, 7. God’s right of ownership of His people is twofold: Creator and Redeemer. This is evident in both of these passages. He’s the One without whom you can do nothing (John 15:5). In Psalm 100:3 the psalmist reminds his people that God created them and they did not create themselves. The Isaiah 43 passage speaks of both creation and redemption, and the NT revelation of redemption by the blood of Christ is taught in Ephesians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; and 1 Peter 1:18-19, just to name a few texts.

*“Humble Themselves”*

Humility is the opposite of pride, the attitude of arrogant independence. It is important to become aware of these opposites. Frank Sinatra is remembered by the words of his old song, “I did it *my way*,” a rallying cry reminiscent of the spirit of the age. But the psalmist, recognizing the wisdom of God, prayed, “Teach me *Your way* LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressor” (Psalm 27:11). Humility is deeper than any act, posture, or tone. True humility begins with acknowledging your need for God.

*“Pray and Seek My Face”*

In this text, humility is demonstrated by someone praying. When humility is present in you, peace will be the result. Seekers have varying motives for seeking God. Many out of the desperation of their need seek His hand for what He can give. This is not wrong, for what father among you does not take pleasure in providing for the needs or even wholesome desires of his children? But eventually, all children should come to a place of maturity where they are not just looking to receive but to give. Seeking God’s hand is okay, but seeking His face is better because you’ll be seeking to please God by what you do in line with His will and purpose for your life. The “face” is more the metaphorical image of approval. The deeper you are in prayer, you move from praying for your needs to praying to meet God’s needs. He needs you to be, to go, to do, to love, to forgive, and to teach. He’s looking for you to be humble and fully dependent upon Him and to go and do the needed work of loving, giving, serving, helping, forgiving, counseling, and teaching. Our world is in desperate need of godly men and women for

all seasons;<sup>20</sup> those untouchables who cannot be persuaded to do wrong, however profitable it might be, or dissuaded from doing right, however costly it might be.

*“Turn from Their Wicked Ways”*

In every generation and with everyone in that generation, there is the need for repentance. “Repent” was the preaching cry of both John the Baptist and Jesus. (Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17). Repentance is the first of six teachings of Christ found in Hebrews 6:1-2.<sup>21</sup> God requires change; it is the basic meaning of the verb to repent—to change your mind. The command to *turn from your wicked ways* is the cry of a loving heavenly Father who knows what wicked ways will do to you. You must not allow the world’s opinions to dissuade you from what is truly moral by their labeling it old fashioned or a part of some antiquated ultra-conservative worldview. If you do, you may legitimize the murder of unborn children by renaming them fetuses, or because the birth will cause inconvenience, or the child is the wrong gender. Or you may legitimize the enslaving of a different color race of people because it is economically advantageous, or change the definitions of family and marriage, the foundational pillars of a healthy society, in an attempt to appease a perverted minority in the name of democratic diversity.<sup>22</sup> The move of God your society needs cannot occur as long as God’s people are compromising truth, excusing wicked ways, and refusing to repent and turn to God.

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1990). The book was an original play depiction of Sir Thomas More’s clash with King Henry VIII over his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. The phrase has come to mean a person who lives his life by principles anchored in character and integrity.

<sup>21</sup> Hebrews 6:1-2 lists the six as: Repentance, Faith, Baptisms, Laying on of Hands, Resurrection, and Eternal Judgment.

<sup>22</sup> These issues are not new. Isaiah pronounced a woe against those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter (5:20). And if you take a stand against “bitter,” you will be branded “bitterphobic.”

I attended those rallies of the past generation calling for national repentance, I sang the songs, shouted the shouts, and prayed the prayers for revival. I attended every Washington for Jesus meeting where tens of thousands of believers from multiple denominational affiliations were present in agreement. Out of those meetings that were characterized by repentance and worship emerged a truth that shook us viscerally. That truth, simply put: the origin of the perpetuation of the problems of our world is not political, financial, social, psychological, cultural, technical, or even educational—the problem is a “*My people* problem.” This does not mean there are no systemic anomalies within each of those disciplines, but the fundamental problem with our society, based on the truth of 2 Chronicles 7:14 is “*My people*.” The land can be healed if God’s people get their act together.

#### A “My People” Problem

The sin of God’s people which fuels the world’s perpetual problems manifests itself in two ways: (1) Through the presence of wrongdoing, and (2) Through the absence of unity.

First, disobedience opened a door for Satan to exercise authority over the kingdoms of this world. This theological construct connects the Fall of Man in Genesis 3, sin and death entering the world (Romans 5:12), and Satan not being challenged by Jesus when in the wilderness temptation he said that the authority over all of the kingdoms of the world had been given to him (Luke 4:5-6). This along with the apostle Paul calling Satan the “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4) has led to the conclusion that Satan exercises dominion in our world. But as a mature believer who prays, you recognize the authority God has given you and you sing songs like,

*This is my Father's world  
And may we ne'er forget  
That though the wrong seems oft so strong  
God is the ruler yet.<sup>23</sup>*

Second, because of the absence of unity, the work God has given the Church to do is less effective because the world of mankind does not believe God sent Christ to save them. Our Enemy succeeds in blinding the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4). This permitted and excused absence of unity demonstrates also a blindness of leadership in the Body of Christ. To use the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:3-5, we are unable to see clearly to impart vision to those in the world because of our own blindness. We must first remedy this sin of division in the Church before we with authority can move to correct the sins in others.

#### *"I Will Hear From Heaven"*

The promise to hear is more than an acknowledgement that God hears your prayers. It carries with it a peace, an assurance that you are on the right path leading to a Promised Land all mature prayer warriors seek. It's a place where demonic strongholds are demolished, where repentance, reconciliation, and revival are menu items most are ordering, and where the presence of hatred, greed, crime, institutionalized discrimination, educational ignorance, immorality, perversion, poverty, and disenfranchisement are minimized by virtue of the loving dominion of God's kingdom of righteousness.

#### *"I Will Forgive Their Sin"*

This promise, of course, is the result of genuine repentance. To honestly confess sin means you agree with what God says is sin. The Greek word *homologeo*, often translated in English "confess," literally means "to say the same thing." There can be no

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<sup>23</sup> *This is My Father's World*, Maltbie D. Babcock, (1858-1901) and Franklin L. Sheppard, (1852-1930).

debate here. The intellectual, liberal, or modern worldview cards are all trumped by what God says, and genuine repentance will include a godly sorrow leading to change from sinful appetites and practices. The word in our text, sin (in the singular), is reminiscent of the sin Jesus exhorted the Holy Spirit would enable believers to expose in the world, taught in John 16:8-9—the sin of unbelief. With this understanding, the foundation for “sins” is the sin of unbelief. When God’s people get to the place where they really believe, the door to sins, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life will cease (1 John 2:15-16).

*“And [I] Will Heal Their Land”*

God is the only Being in the universe who can provide healing for the land, for our cities, our schools, our institutions, our nation, and our world. He is the ultimate *Rapha*—our doctor/healer. This healing miracle is promised when we meet the conditions. This promise is the ultimate goal every prayer warrior pursues effectually and fervently. With healing comes the dominion of God’s kingdom of righteousness that includes a just society where equity is the rule of the day. The cry of our hearts is,

Father, lead us! O God, help us, Your Church, to humble ourselves in prayer to seek Your face. We want Your will to be done and Your kingdom to come. We genuinely repent and determine to turn from our wicked ways. Give us the confirmation of assurance and peace that we may know You are pleased with our brokenness, know You have forgiven our sin of unbelief, and know You are moving to bring healing in every part of our land. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Connected to this is the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus in John 17, an excerpt of which is included here:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one—I in them and You in Me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me. (John 17: 20-23)

Jesus prayed the Church would be one as the Godhead is one so the world would believe the Father sent His Son. The Son of God released in prayer agreement the resource of the Father to enable our unity, but though the unity God has enabled has the backing of His power and wisdom, it is yet fragile because it needs to be maintained by us if we are to experience all of its benefits. In much of what God provides for the Church there is a cooperative, faith-believing part we must play in order for the full benefits of the promise or provision to be actualized.

The quest for the truth of unity must be mirrored in experience and not just in words: “A quest for truth should not merely be an earnest desire to know truth cognitively, although that is certainly involved, but also a passion to find out how to do the truth experientially ... Jesus prayed that all believers at all times would know the same kind of unity he enjoyed with the Father.”<sup>24</sup>

You may seek to characterize denominational divisions as benign, but the spirit of division is manifested within every major and minor denomination: Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, United Church of Christ, Baptist, Pentecostal, etc. Some of the divisions can be termed *legitimate* given the purpose for separation was moral due to the ongoing scourge of theological liberalism and the compromise of truth. But most of the divisions are illegitimate because they were motivated by prejudice, minor doctrinal disputes, power struggles, pride, personality or the like. Further, the spirit of division is present in the average local church where there is war between choir members, or where the senior deacons or ushers have no fellowship with the juniors under them, or where there exists unresolved tension between old and young, male and female, single and

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<sup>24</sup> Douglas A. Hall, *The Cat and the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 12, 51.

married folk, members of long standing and new members. The love that is greater than both faith and hope can be almost non-existent in the relationships of members within the average local church. If ever there was a time to call on the neglected resource of prayer, it is now.

#### Psalm 24

As one who prays the Word in the power of the Spirit with a Kingdom of God consciousness, I have come to see the following Psalm through new eyes:

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters. Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob. Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty— he is the King of glory. (Psalm 24)

The psalmist begins by setting the stage for God to request something extremely important for His servants to do. The opening statement is one of ownership: “The earth is the LORD'S and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” The psalmist postulates that God owns everything in the earth: that is the birds, the bees, the rocks, and the trees; whether it's animal, vegetable, or mineral— God owns it, but that's not all. He also owns you and me: “the world, and all who live in it.” In verse two the psalmist gives the foundation for God's ownership of everything and everybody, “...for He founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.” So God owns everything by virtue of His creative ability. This truth is reiterated elsewhere, for example in Psalm 100:3, “Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His.”

Having established God's right of ownership, the inspired psalmist gets to the reason the establishing of ownership was necessary: the LORD has a job He wants you to perform, a responsibility He needs you to assume, and it's something for which you must qualify. The qualifications listed in verses three and four begin with God asking a question that is central to the responsibility God is asking the reader to consider in this entire psalm: "Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?" These two questions are, in essence, one. God is asking, "Who qualifies to be a priest?" A priest is one who speaks to God for people; her or his major responsibility is to pray.<sup>25</sup> The call of God in this psalm is for the believer to qualify himself as a spiritual priest God can use. It is important to note that the requirements to be used are strictly outlined:

1. One who has clean hands
2. One who has a pure heart
3. One who does not trust in an idol
4. One who does not swear by a false god

#### *"Clean Hands"*

Clean hands, the initial criterion for a spiritual priest, simply stated, is outward observable righteousness. I remember my summers as an elementary age youth when my mother would call for my brothers and me to come in for lunch. She would tell us to go wash our hands and we would go to the bathroom, turn the water on in the sink, but without wetting our hands wipe them on our pants. Of course Mom wouldn't let us touch our sandwiches before examining how well we'd washed. She'd say, "Let me see your hands." After viewing them, she sent us back to wash them saying, "This time, let the water run on them and use the soap." This is what is needed today in the church where

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<sup>25</sup> The prophet is the opposite: one who speaks to people for God. Her or his major responsibility is to preach. Prophets represent God and priests represent people.

leaders are being accused of every kind of malfeasance imaginable: clean hands—outward observable righteousness.<sup>26</sup>

This requirement is important because sinful acts, un-repentant offenses, unpaid debts, un-kept promises, broken relationships, etc. disqualify us for service. The disqualification is both vertical and horizontal. It is vertical because God prefers to use clean vessels to serve spiritual food to others (2 Timothy 2:20-21). It is horizontal because most people are reluctant to receive counsel from someone who is a poor example of their own advice. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:3-5, speaks of how incongruous it is to feel qualified to minister to others when you are blinded by your own failures:

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

It should not be viewed as unusual that God requires His servants to have clean hands. Before the Levitical priests could enter the holy place of the tent of meeting they had to wash their hands and feet with the water in the bronze laver (Exodus 40:30-32). The washing was an ablution, a ceremonial act of washing parts of the body; it represented the judging of themselves in their spiritual walk. Water for washing in the Old Testament is a type of the Word of God, and the apostle Paul confirmed this when he

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<sup>26</sup> The apostle Paul in listing the qualifications for elders and overseers outlined specific moral expectations in both Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7. In the seventh verse of 1 Timothy 3, he actually states that these leaders “should have a good reputation with outsiders,” emphasizing how crucial this matter of clean hands is to the ongoing success of the work of the kingdom of God.

wrote of being cleansed by the washing of water with the Word (Ephesians 5:26; cf. John 15:3).<sup>27</sup>

The Teacher's Commentary further confirms this making use of the New Testament application of these Old Testament symbols,

The laver, a large container for water, was made of the same bronze metal as the altar...and was for the cleansing of those who entered the Presence. Jesus used a similar symbolism at the time of the Last Supper when He washed the disciples' feet. They have been cleansed, He told them, so they did not need another "bath." But as they had walked the dusty roads after the bathing, their feet needed to be washed again and again (John 13:2–12). Believers have been cleansed by the blood of Christ. Yet daily we need to turn to God for cleansing. The provision of cleansing is clearly ours: "If we confess our sins [those daily failures that mar the lives even of those who have experienced salvation], He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The continual cleansing each of us needs is provided in Christ, and pictured in the laver before the tabernacle entrance. Purified, we can freely enter the presence of our God.<sup>28</sup>

Having clean hands—outward observable righteousness—is part of the mindset of the priest God uses.

#### *"Pure Heart"*

Pure heart speaks of having a right relationship with God, one that is anchored in faith in the covenant connection. In the Old Testament, it included walking in obedience to the Law of the LORD repeated numerous times using Hebrew parallelism. Notice two passages: Deuteronomy 28:1, "If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands," and Exodus 15:26, "If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees...". Of course, the Lord is the One who ultimately examines our hearts.

Remember the words of Samuel at the anointing of David. When Samuel was attracted

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. W. W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), see Numbers 20:1-13.

<sup>28</sup> L. Richards & L. O. Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 104.

to the strong outward appearance of Jesse's firstborn, Eliab, he thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD" (1 Samuel 16:6). But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him" (v. 7a). It continues, "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (v. 7b).

In the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). It should come as no surprise to any Bible believing person that God requires purity of heart. Though in our humanity we are all flawed, yet because of our faith in Christ, God purifies our hearts and sanctifies our desires. It is possible to have integrity of motive, and to be a person of honest, upright character. God is not being unreasonable when He commands His people in the Old and New Testaments to be holy (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16). Purity of heart, holiness of lifestyle, is part of the mindset of the priest God uses.

#### *"Does not Trust in an Idol"*

There can be no idolatry in the life of one used of God. In the extreme sense, idolatry is the worship of a false god. It may be a statue made of stone, wood, metal, or clay. It may be something in the heavens: the sun, moon, or some configuration of the stars (e.g. signs of the Zodiac). It may even be a so-called special person like a guru, but whoever or whatever it is, if it is not God, it is false and therefore idolatry.

In the not-so-literal sense, idolatry is putting anything ahead of God and His kingdom. So people can treat a spouse or a child in an idolatrous way; they can treat money, a career, or even a recreational event in an idolatrous way by preferring that person, thing, practice, or event above God and His kingdom. Prioritizing God's kingdom and His righteousness is commanded (Matthew 6:33). We are encouraged not to

worry and to trust God to supply our needs. This is part of the mindset of the priest God uses.

*“[Does Not] Swear by a False God”*

This matter of honesty, integrity, probity, and trustworthiness is not minor. God requires his servants to be people of character, someone whose name is respected and invites trust (Proverbs 21:1). This criterion of character is all too often treated by those who are responsible for examining leaders for hire as a non-issue. We much prefer examining their talent and their erudition— where they went to school, what their major was. We want them to be shrewd, competitive, driven, and even a little dishonest. We don't want them so straight that they will not stretch the truth to turn a profit. How they conduct their private interpersonal affairs and how they have dealt with the challenges of moral dilemmas is not at issue in many power-driven circles. But in the business of the kingdom of God, character is key. This is not to say that talent, giftedness, charisma, schooling, and knowledge are not important, but in the pursuit of leadership, these qualities must be considered in tandem with the qualities of character and not to the exclusion of them.

*Blessing and Vindication*

The psalmist continues in verse five announcing benefits for those who meet the four criteria qualifying for the office of priest, one who represents people to God: “They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Savior.” Blessing comes in all colors, shapes, and sizes so to speak; no sane person would refuse to be blessed. Blessing can be spiritual in terms of revelation knowledge and discernment; the spiritual blessing may include a grace gift useful to ministering benefit to members of the Body. Blessing can be physical pertaining to healing or deliverance from sickness,

disease, or infirmity. Blessing may be relational; it could include the repentance of a rebellious child or the reconciliation with an angry spouse. Blessing can be financial; the Lord could open a door for employment, enable favor to surface in a business transaction, or have you at the right place at the right time to get the bargain of a lifetime saving you hundreds or thousands of dollars. They will receive blessing from the LORD.

They are also promised vindication. By definition, *vindication* is the act of being justified, exonerated; being declared and proven not guilty by undeniable evidence. God in this text under the title of Savior promises vindication.

#### *“A Generation Who Seeks Him”*

The progression of verse six proclaims those who understand God's right to ownership and conscription by virtue of creation and redemption are called into His service as priests. You are to represent in prayer those you know. You recognize the serious nature and need of the call, you've examined and made the adjustments to meet the criteria, you recognize God's blessing and protection as promised by way of vindication, and now, in this verse, you are told you are a part of the generation who seeks the *face* of the God of Jacob: “Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob.”

There is something intrinsically exciting about being counted as a part of a generation that is doing something others are not doing. We are exhorted by the prophet Isaiah to “seek the LORD while He may be found; to call on Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6), but according to the preceding criteria, there are not many seekers. And this naming of those who seek the face of the God of Jacob as a generation seems to indicate something special. My sense is God is actually seeking those who will seek His face.

There are those who seek God's hand for what they can get, and there are those who seek His face for what they can give. The former are weak immature Christians (if Christians at all), and the latter are mature believers who desire the will of the Lord to flow in them and through them. They seek a greater anointing for service, a greater closeness to hear His voice, a greater knowledge to understand the mysteries so as to be better teachers and ministers to others.

*"Lift up Your Heads, You Gates"*

Finally, the last few verses, I believe, are the capstone on the entire call to being a spiritual priest. My contention is these verses must be interpreted within the context of the entire psalm. Following that contextual path has lead me to see the "gates" as people and not as wooden or metal doors that swing on hinges at the entrance to the city.

Gates were traditionally a "place for the transaction of public business, [and for the] announcement of legal transactions."<sup>29</sup> The leaders of the city literally sat in the city gate (Deuteronomy 22:15; 25:7; Proverbs 31:23). These leaders were decision-makers with the authority to monitor, approve, or disapprove of those who sought to gain entrance into the city. I believe the psalmist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, used that which was common politically in the governance of an ancient city to make a figurative connection to spiritual prayer-warrior priests, calling them "gates."

The revelation is we have more authority than we give ourselves credit for. When qualified spiritual priests pray (i.e., "lift up their heads"), ancient supernatural doors open and the King of Glory comes into our circumstances; the LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. The old saints would say, "He's never lost a battle and He can do anything but fail." With that in mind, cry out to God, lift up your head and watch the

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<sup>29</sup> J. Swanson, and O. Nave, *New Nave's* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1994).

King of Glory, the LORD Almighty make a way where there is no way. Given this truth, the church needs to access as often as possible this power of prayer.

Ezekiel 22:30

I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before Me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.

—Ezekiel 22:30

Most of the exhortations encouraging relationship between you and God place the initiative for establishing that relationship on you.<sup>30</sup> The biblical expectation is that you will obey exhortations to “draw near” and “seek” and experience a higher level of intimacy with Christ; an intimacy needed not only by you but also by those you influence.

Some passages in the Bible, however, reverse this order. In 2 Chronicles 16:9 God “strengthens those whose hearts are fully committed to Him,” and in John 4:23-24, when Jesus is talking with the Samaritan woman at the well, we see God seeks true worshipers, namely “those who worship in Spirit and in truth.” Additionally, this passage from Ezekiel states that God is looking for someone who can do a specific ministry to the people near them, namely a teaching priest,<sup>31</sup> who can and will “build up the wall” (teach) and “stand in the gap” (pray).

Teaching builds up a wall of truth protection around those you love and serve. Salvation is depicted in the Old Testament metaphorically as a wall (Isaiah 26:1); an appropriate designation given that because of the covenant the Children of Israel had with

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<sup>30</sup> Theologically, we understand the Lord has already made possible our initiative through Christ’s death and resurrection, initiating all moves toward reconciliation. Nevertheless, throughout the Bible we see examples of people seeking God. Notice these few representative exhortations: Deuteronomy 4:29; 12:5; 1 Chronicles 16:10-11; 2 Chronicles 15:12; Isaiah 55:6; Jeremiah 29:13; 33:3; Matthew 7:7-8. Cf. John 12:32, Titus 2:11, and 2 Corinthians 5:19.

<sup>31</sup> The term “teaching-priest” comes from 2 Chronicles 15 where the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Obed and he prophesied to Asa king of Judah.

the LORD, He promised if they obeyed His laws and kept His statutes He would protect them from their enemies (Deuteronomy 28:7). This translates into the New Covenant application where a teaching-priest builds a wall of salvation-truth around someone to whom he is ministering, and in obedience, that “someone” is protected from the wiles of the Enemy.

Standing before God translates into prayer—the kind of kingdom praying where the concern is for the will of God to be done and for His kingdom to come, i.e. prayer on behalf of the land. With regard to the issue of being a teaching-priest, the expectation is you will stand before God in prayer for the ones to whom you are ministering.

#### Habakkuk 2:1-3

I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what He will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. Then the LORD replied: “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it lingers, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.”

The prophet was perplexed by the spiritual condition of his nation, God’s silence, the lack of justice, the righteous being devoured by the wicked with impunity, and God using a heathen nation, Babylon, to chasten Judah. Though the prophet ends his prophecy with a prayer of praise, what he witnessed and writes in this beginning is instructive as the prophet seeks the LORD by setting himself to pray.

He begins with the language of a watchman, one responsible for oversight on the walls of the city. He can see inside and outside the wall observing trouble or detecting danger and his elevated position on the wall and his elevated position of trust burden him with the responsibility to warn. He positions himself on the ramparts, the roof of a cylindrical tower built into the wall. The tower is higher than the wall and to stand on the

rampart enables him to see in every direction—a complete 360 degrees.<sup>32</sup> What a picture of this man’s determination to position himself to remove every conceivable obstacle in order to see and understand God’s revelation. The prophet standing watch on the wall of the city has assumed a position of responsibility with a warfare posture. He has clothed himself with the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) and has no fear in exercising his authority (Luke 10:19) over the Enemy.

The prophet continues, “I will look to see what He will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.” He has positioned himself to seek God in order to catch a vision (KJV), or a revelation (NIV) of God’s purpose. This phrase, “look to see what He will say,” is the perfect definition of a vision from God. It is seeing what God is saying. His revelation opens your eyes to what He is doing and what He expects of you. Your ability to find your place in *His* plan increases when you take the time and exert the effort to seek Him in prayer.

We are not told how long Habakkuk was standing his watch stationed on the ramparts, but he endured long enough to hear God say, “‘Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it lingers, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay’” (vv. 2-3).

Some of these words are used to encourage believers in Hebrews 10:37 not to lose confidence. When God speaks about an “appointed time” that “will not prove false,” even though it may “linger” you should “wait for it,” for it will “certainly come and will not delay,” hearing that is worth everything. Hell can freeze over, scoffers and doubters may multiply, conditions may degenerate, but when you really hear a spoken word from

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<sup>32</sup> The underlying Hebrew term is literally “encirclement.” C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1365.

the Lord of the Harvest, you can stand anything. If these exhortations were in the New Testament, they would be in red letters. Solid strength is gained as you in obedience ask, seek, and knock in faith (Matthew 7:7-8), hear God and understand the revelation of His heart, and act in confidence to find your place in His plan. As a leader, part of that is *writing down the revelation* and sharing it with others who are running with you, those *heralds*. This points out an important fact—you cannot accomplish the vision God gives alone; thus the necessity of agreement in the prayer process. You don't pray alone. You don't walk in faith alone, and you will not rejoice in the victory alone. You must hear God about others.

#### *Hearing God: An Illustration*

We were in the last service of the revival. The evangelist, one whom God used on several occasions to inspire faith for healing, at the close of the sermon called for those who wanted hands laid on them in prayer for healing to come forward. First to come was the 12-year-old son of a couple in the church. These parents were long-time members and their only child suffered from chronic nosebleeds. He had one as they arrived for service and had been in the basement of the church trying to get the blood to stop. On past occasions, his parents had to resort to going to the Emergency Room at the local hospital where a doctor would cauterize his nose tissue to stop the bleeding. But on this occasion, they were in church and decided to wait until after the service was over before they made the trek to the Emergency Room. However, when they saw there would be prayer for healing, they had an usher retrieve their son from the basement so he could be prayed for. The evangelist and I prayed for him first given his obvious need for healing. I'd never seen a nosebleed quite like that: a steady stream of blood flowed from both nostrils. The usher who'd brought him to the front held a small trash basket full of blood

soaked tissues. It was both scary and intimidating. We laid hands on him and prayed but to no avail. We prayed again and again for his nose to stop bleeding, but without the slightest bit of success. Finally, the evangelist left him and went on to pray for others who had come to the altar for healing, and the young man went and sat on the front pew. I went with him and stood in front of him continuing to pray. Here was a young boy, 12 years old, who had given his life to Christ under my ministry and we could not get him healed from a simple nosebleed.

I remember praying, “Father, I’ve been preaching to these Your people that it is Your will to heal them and the first chance we get to demonstrate that truth, we fail. This is embarrassing! If you weren’t going to heal somebody, why didn’t you send someone who has a hidden condition? That way, no one would know we failed, but this nosebleed shouts loud and clear, NO HEALING HERE! Why have we failed?”

When I asked the question in all sincerity, I realized for the first time that we had failed. Since there’s no failure in God, the failure is always with us. So I prayed, “Lord, how did we miss it? Where did we fail?”

I heard Him say distinctly, “Ask him if he’s saved.”

I looked at him sitting in front of me, “Junior, are you saved?” I asked.

“No pastor, I’m backslidden.” By then, his parents were on their way to the front to retrieve their son and take him to the doctor. I gently ushered Junior and his parents into a prayer-room next to the altar. When there, I said to his parents, “Junior is not saved.”

His mother responded, “Pastor, I thought you knew Junior had backslidden.”

“No, I didn’t know,” I said. Then I looked at their son and said, “Junior, in order to be healed, you must be on healing ground. Healing is the children’s bread. Now get

on your knees and repent of your backsliding and God will heal you without anyone having to pray for you. I'll know you got through to God because your nose will stop bleeding." When I said that, I was tempted to fear given how long we'd prayed for him without success, but I was emboldened by having heard the Lord speak to me. Somehow, I knew this was a healing moment. He knelt down, closed his eyes and prayed while I watched his nose. The Bible says to watch as well as pray. I saw the miracle with my own eyes. In just a matter of a few seconds, the bleeding went from streams to drips to a gentle spray. He opened his eyes. I asked, "Did you get through?"

He answered, "Yes, Pastor."

Dabbing his nose with the tissue in my hand, I asked, "Where is your nosebleed?" Some would say he was healed by the power of God, but I would say, "It surely was God's power, but it did not happen until he got on healing ground." And the faith that brought it came from hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

Ephesians 1:18-23; 2:3-6

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way ... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, *made us alive* with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God *raised us up* with Christ and *seated us with him* in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. (emphasis mine)

In these two passages of Scripture the apostle Paul lays the foundation for every believer's faith position in Christ. The importance of a faith position is usually not seen

until a significant need arises and prayer ensues. In Ephesians 2:5-6, three statements are made about believers in the aorist tense (past tense):

1. You have been *made alive* with Christ. A spiritual resurrection took place when you heard the Word and believed on the Lord (John 5:24-25); you spiritually passed from death in transgressions and sins (Ephesians 2:1 KJV; 1 Timothy 5:6) to life, new life in Christ.
2. You have been *raised up* with Christ. The significance of being “raised up” apart from being “made alive” is this raising carries with it an understanding and maturity grown out of experience. For example, it is one thing to come alive in the tomb after hearing the voice of the Son of God, “Lazarus, come forth,” but it’s another thing to hear, “Loose him and let him go,” and be freed from the bondage of the grave clothing. He raised you up to experience His power and to do a work worthy of His name.
3. You have been *seated* with Christ in the heavenly realms. The Greek word translated *seated us with Him* (“made us sit together” KJV) is *sugkathidzo*. The word *kathidzo* is used often in the New Testament to refer to an authority figure being *seated* upon a throne or some other seat of judgment and authority.<sup>33</sup> I believe it is being used that way here. As a believer, you are seated on a throne of authority with Christ. Your position gives you the ability to exercise rule and authority. Post resurrection, Christ is seated (*kathidzo*) at the Father’s right hand in the heavenly realms. Incidentally, this is the same “*heavenly realms*” mentioned in 2:6 where believers are seated. The place where Christ is seated at the Father’s right hand is further amplified by the comparison with demonic principalities, “...far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” The truth taught here is that when a mature believer knows his or her position in Christ, their understanding in prayer is they are seated at the Father’s right hand (in Christ) and they are far above every kind of demonic authority in existence, and above every name that can be invoked in this present age and also in the one to come.

#### *How Does This Influence Prayer?*

This means *you* have the authority Jesus gave the disciples in Luke 10:19, “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.” This means the *stand* Paul exhorted the Ephesians to take against the devil’s schemes and the *struggle* he said to engage in against the rulers,

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. e.g. Matthew 19:28; 20:21; 20:23; 22:44; 23:2; 25:31; 26:36.

authorities, powers of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms is for you.

You and I are called to confront and fight against demonic principalities in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:10-18). Some believe this is dangerous. I agree—it is dangerous for those who do not know whose they are and the blood-bought position in which they stand.

John Paul Jackson in his book *Needless Casualties of War*<sup>34</sup> attempts to warn believers against confronting demonic principalities. Throughout his book, he gives examples of catastrophes, mostly physical and emotional and some relational, where someone launched into a fight with a demonic principality and was injured (some fatally). The book caused many to withdraw in fear from warfare prayer. This was unfortunate for those mature prayer warriors who, because of their maturity, were in no danger of demonic reprisal. It was fortunate for others who, due to their spiritual and theological immaturity and due to their relational independence and lack of connectedness including submission to spiritual authority, should not have been trying to do what they were not ready to do (cf. Acts 19:14-16).

The truth of the book's thesis is, there are *needless casualties of war*, but not because the devil is so strong and is to be feared; it is because the ones praying are so weak and in need of training and support. While I do not doubt the sincerity of the author in trying to warn the Body of Christ against a level of spiritual warfare that he says exposes you to the sight of the demonic, as though you stuck your head out of the foxhole,<sup>35</sup> yet it is sad that the solid exegetical teaching of Scripture about your power

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<sup>34</sup> John Paul Jackson, *Needless Casualties of War* (Sutton, NH: Streams Publications, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Jackson, *Casualties*, 42.

and position in Christ and the need to strengthen your faith in the immediate and ultimate victory of your struggle against the Enemy is glaringly absent.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A BEGINNING PRAYER MOVEMENT

#### **A Contemporary Gathering of Warriors**

Certainly, the contemporary roots of prayer in and for New England began before anyone kept notes, recorded their prayer gatherings in some sort of logbook or diary, or met consistently in some organized way that affected notice. Significant prayer warriors in and for New England have been praying without fanfare or notice for years. Spiritual generals have their ears to the spiritual ground to discern the will of God for their area. They hear the call, “lift up your heads O you gates” (Psalm 24:7-10), and in faith they pray in expectation for the King of Glory to come in. Here are some examples.

#### *The Five-Mile Prayer*

Dr. Douglas Hall documents what was called *The Five-Mile Prayer*, where a small band of believers faithfully met every Saturday night from about 1960 to 1968 to pray that “every soul in a radius of five miles” of their little mission would have the opportunity to hear the gospel presented relevantly to them. When that “five-mile” group had heard they prayed for those living five miles beyond that, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Refuge Temple Revival Center*

In the late 60’s and early 70’s, a formidable deliverance ministry led by a former policeman, Rev. William C. Dorsey and his wife Katherine emerged in Roxbury. Sister Dorsey was a deeply spiritual prayer warrior who fasted more days in the week than she ate and went on a 40-day fast annually for years. She won her husband to the Lord and together they started Refuge Temple Revival Center. Their ministry was characterized

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas A. Hall, *The Cat and the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 34.

by intense evangelistic campaigns bathed in fasting and prayer where a multitude of young people found their way to salvation in their meetings. Their summers found them in street meetings with electronic amplified choir music, church members testifying about how God saved and delivered them, and preaching. In the early 70's, the church obtained permission to use a vacant lot in a thickly populated neighborhood in Dorchester for a summer-long tent meeting with services every night. The church experienced significant growth in these nightly evangelistic services where the salvation of the lost was their major goal. Members were acculturated into prayer through overnight shut-ins at the church every other month or so. As the ministry grew, it sought to organize more effectively a ministry of cottage prayer meetings and to harmonize them with their corporate gatherings for worship and teaching.

*New Covenant Christian Church/Jubilee*

In 1978, I broke through in faith to a spiritual experience that transformed my prayer life and faith perspective. I received what Jesus called being baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), or being clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49), a common experience known within charismatic circles. In 1986, understanding the implications of being a "house of prayer" (Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 when He cleansed the temple), I called my church to become a House of Prayer and we established Early Morning Prayer (EMP) meetings weekdays, 5-6 AM, and Saturdays, 7-8 AM.<sup>2</sup>

I taught prayer patterns, the importance of prayer, and the significance of spiritual power that is released when people are prayerful. There is a greater commitment to kingdom truth, a clearer kingdom perspective when people are praying. Even the

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<sup>2</sup> From 1986 to 1991, because we owned no church sanctuary, we met in a second floor room in a small office building we owned for the one-hour: Monday to Friday 5-6 AM and Saturday 7-8 AM. After Palm Sunday 1991, as owners of 1500 Blue Hill Avenue, we increased the one-hour to two hours on the weekdays: 5-6 AM and 6-7 AM.

atmosphere in the Sunday morning services carried a warm joyous flavor attributable to the fact people were praying. The organizing of members to join me in learning how to pray in faith, standing in prayer against principalities and powers, and establishing with dominion authority the kingdom of God in every sphere of their influence—spiritual, relational, physical, and financial—created a significant, noticeable, measurable difference in the health and life of our church.

Prayer is not something you can delegate. You cannot do my praying for me. I'm present in EMP because I need to pray; my spirit grows cold apart from regularly experiencing that worship/prayer place of intimacy with God. I've learned in praying how to pray effectively. I cherish being known as a "man of prayer" even more than being called a "man of God." There are men of God who are not accustomed to spending time in prayer. Having a praying church has changed my church. The discipline of prayer warriors grabbing the spiritual weapon of the Word and standing a spiritual post in faith against the enemy has created an "open heaven"<sup>3</sup> in our church. Prayer is foundational to everything else we need and desire.

Warfare prayer has actually lightened the darkness of the atmosphere of our city. As quiet as it is kept, warfare prayer is part of the foundation behind the collaborative unity that facilitated the Boston Miracle, discussed below. Warfare prayer actually caused pastoral changes in our city so that pastors who were morally and theologically unfit for ministry eventually left the pastorate and/or left our city.

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<sup>3</sup> An open heaven is a place where hearing God, understanding His Word, and receiving in faith what is promised is easier. An open heaven facilitates repentance, brokenness, the ability to surrender, to see one's self and desire to change.

## **The Quiet Revival: Non-Denominational Church Growth**

A senior researcher for the Emmanuel Gospel Center (EGC), Rudy Mitchell, offers this historical perspective of revivalism in Boston: "From the first Great Awakening in 1740, one hundred years after Boston's founding, to the Billy Graham Revival of 1950, we take a look back to see what has happened in our city in the past in order to sharpen our vision and faith for what can happen in the future."<sup>4</sup>

EGC has prayerfully researched and documented the progress of the Church in New England. Here summarized are some recent survey results:

We begin to see a picture of the activity of Christianity in Boston (2001-2006) emerging. The Growing Edge of Boston's Church Community is coming into view. Furthermore, we can now begin to ask some of the more particular questions regarding the vitality of the church in Boston, such as, "Is the Quiet Revival stage which begun in 1965 continuing?" "What is the number of new churches planted in Boston?" "Is the rate of church planting consistent with what has been observed in the past decades of the Quiet Revival?" "Where in Boston are these new churches being planted?" "Who is planting them?" and, "What populations are being engaged in the process?" With this current survey information we can begin to see the number and nature of the churches in The Growing Edge of Boston's Church Community.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Boston Miracle**

The Boston Police Department documented what has been called The Boston Miracle, a 29-month period ending in January 1998 where there were no teenage homicide victims. The miracle not only included the absence of homicide victims, but also prior to no teenagers dying, there began the miracle of collaborations that obviously facilitated the creation of an atmosphere of peace that settled over the population, especially the at-risk population of inner-city youth. A research paper entitled "End of a

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<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Gospel Center: Emmanuel Research Review, <http://www.egc.org/research> (accessed March 12, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Brian Corcoran, "The Growing Edge of Boston's Church Community," Emmanuel Gospel Center, <http://www.egc.org/err19> (accessed March 12, 2012).

Miracle? Crime, Faith, and Partnership in Boston in the 1990's" by Christopher Winship of Harvard University in March 2002 adequately documents this:

Much less discussed, though perhaps equally miraculous, is that the Police Department in the 1990's formed a partnership with a group of inner city black ministers directed at dealing with the problem of youth violence. This is remarkable at two different levels. First, in the early 1990's, the relationship between the Department and one of three core ministers in the coalition, Reverend Eugene Rivers, was openly and highly inimical. Second, and more generally, Boston's race relations have historically been highly antagonistic. The fact that the Police and any group of black citizens would be willing to work together is extraordinary. Not surprisingly, Boston's achievements have received considerable national attention, culminating in a *Newsweek* cover story in June 1, 1998. On the cover was one of the Ten Point Coalition's key leaders, the Reverend Eugene Rivers. Inside, the story detailed both how a group of black inner city ministers had first come to work together as a coalition, and then to work with the police in dealing with the problem of gang-related youth violence.<sup>6</sup>

The miracle of peace was facilitated and punctuated by a unique multiple-organization collaboration never before experienced. Godly, prayerful pastors with a kingdom of God consciousness and a vision for community peace met regularly with members of the Boston Police Department, School Police, MBTA Police, Probation Department, Department of Youth Services, Department of Youth and Street Workers, and Boston School Department. They shared information and strategized around how to cooperate with each other for the salvation of our youth in our community. This collaboration enabled a level of personal interaction with gang members where the ministry of "touch love" was evident, as documented in the article "Religion and the Boston Miracle: The Effect of Black Ministry on Youth Violence."<sup>7</sup> The article begins

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<sup>6</sup> Jenny Berrien, Omar McRoberts, and Christopher Winship. "An 'Umbrella of Legitimacy: Boston's Police Department-Ten Point Coalition Collaboration,'" in *Securing Our Children's Future: New Approaches to Juvenile Justice and Youth Violence*, Gary Katzmann, editor (Brookings Institution). Forthcoming; Christopher Winship and Jenny Berrien. "Boston Cops and Black Churches." *Public Interest*. 136 (1999a): 52-68.

<sup>7</sup> Jenny Berrien, Omar McRoberts, and Christopher Winship, "Religion and the Boston Miracle: The Effect of Black Ministry on Youth Violence," in *Who Will Provide? The Changing Role of Religion in American Social Welfare*, edited by Mary Jo Bane, Brent Coffin, and Ronald Thiemann (Boulder, CO: Westview

by mentioning a Joe Klein article that analyzed what the ministering pastors, Ten Point, and those associated with them do for at-risk youth in their own church youth programs:

To paraphrase [the ministers'] message: "You have a choice. Stop your gang-banging and we will help you—help you get back in school or get a job, help you deal with your family, your girlfriend; help you straighten out your life. Continue to gang-bang and we will work as hard as we can with the police to see that you are put in jail, both for your own good, and the good of the community. As long as you are gang-banging you are a danger to yourself and to others. What I ultimately want to avoid more than anything is presiding over your funeral." The message here is multi-faceted. First, there is the strong implicit message that the youths can live their lives in different ways. Second, it is a demand that youth take personal responsibility for their lives. Third, it is a message of the possibility of redemption. If you choose to give up gang-banging and "go with God," your life will be redeemed. Fourth, if you choose incorrectly, you will be punished. In essence, you must choose between life and death. There are clear parallels between this message and specific Bible passages. For example, consider Deuteronomy 30:17-19, "But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live."

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Press, 2000). Also see Jenny Berrien and Christopher Winship, "Lessons Learned from Boston's Police-Community Collaboration," *Federal Probation Review* (December 1999): 24-32.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### UNDERSTANDING SOME MECHANICS OF PRAYER

#### **The Will of God**

A principal truth behind the will of God is you must desire to do God's will in order to know it. Of course, I recognize in the sovereignty of God, He can call someone to do His will and that person may resist, as did Jonah, or argue against his qualifications, as did Moses, Gideon, or Jeremiah, but for our purposes, these would be exceptions to the rule stated. And of course, God foreknew within the struggle of calling them that they would eventually do His will and fulfill His good purpose. Though God works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose (Philippians 2:13), God does not violate your will in the process. Part of being created in His image (Genesis 1:26-27) is the ability to choose, and free will needs to be understood. Dr. Thiessen, on the "freedom of man," wrote,

God has a very high regard for freedom. He could have made the creature an automaton, but He preferred to make him capable of choosing whether or not he would obey and serve Him. The idea of freedom appears in two forms in Scripture: On the one hand, freedom is thought of simply as the ability to carry out the dictates of one's nature, whether as that of a holy unfallen being or as that of a sinful and fallen one. On the other hand, freedom is conceived of also as the ability to act contrary to one's nature. Originally the creature (both angels and man) had freedom in both senses of the term. It had the ability not to sin and also the ability to sin.<sup>1</sup>

You must choose to do His will (John 7:17) as He works within you to desire and act in order to fulfill His good purpose. There is such a thing as God withholding the knowledge of His will from the rebellious and disobedient. This is actually a product of His mercy; your guilt and punishment is greater when you knowingly do wrong than

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<sup>1</sup> Henry C. Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), 155.

when you do wrong in ignorance. This is the teaching of Jesus in Luke 12:47-48, “The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.”

The teaching of Jesus in John 12:37-41 needs to be understood from the standpoint of mercy as well.

Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them. Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.

While there is a chastening, punishment aspect to God’s dealing with His people,<sup>2</sup> yet you must remember that the Lord chastens those He loves (Hebrews 12:5-11). Thus His dealings with you are from the standpoint of love, mercy, and redemption. The spiritual blinding of eyes and hardening of hearts, Jesus quoting Isaiah 6:10, has to do with God in mercy blinding those who are rebellious and hardening those who refuse to believe. The safest place on the planet is the center of God’s will. It is there you find the ultimate in fulfillment of purpose and destiny, and it is there you receive the greatest assurance of provision and protection.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*’s interpretation of John 12:37-41 did not include the possibility of mercy. They only speak from the position of God’s punishment for sin. While there is punishment for sin that God initiates, you must understand God’s punishment is from the position of redemption. And remember, sin carries its own punishment (Romans 6:23). J. F. Walvoord, R. B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary :An exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), s. v. “John 12:37-41.”

## Faith

### Faith Is Believing a Word

No theology of prayer agreement would be complete without examining what the Bible teaches about faith. In learning how to pray more effectively, you need instruction about faith, specifically, praying in faith. Most people would say faith is a religious word or concept, but they would be wrong. Faith is something everyone—Jew and Gentile, black and white, male and female, old and young, republicans and democrats—have and use every day. When asked to define faith, most Bible teachers give the Hebrews 11:1 definition that leaves most hearers confused. Then the average hearer concludes, “Faith is complicated and difficult to comprehend.” But the truth is: faith simply means to believe—really believe. This believing is more than intellectual assent; it is where you believe with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. It includes a level of believing where prior sight and feelings are unnecessary.

Though the words “faith” and “believe” are different words in English, they are the same in Greek. The noun “faith” comes from the Greek word *pistis*, and the verb “believe” comes from the Greek word *pisteuo*. The root is the same in both words: to have faith is to believe, to believe is to have faith. Additionally, having faith in something simply means you fully believe in that something; you have confidence in the truthfulness or trustworthiness of that something without having to see a test on the spot or feel a pulse. Faith, therefore, does not have to be spiritual. Everyday people live and act in faith without seeing it as some irrational leap in the dark or some special spiritual ability.

However, many will readily put their faith in a person, business, or establishment, but as soon as there’s a shift from the physical to the spiritual, the tables are turned and

all bets are off. But why is it easier to have faith in a person who can be here today and gone tomorrow and not have faith in God who is eternal? Why is it easier to have faith in a business whose bottom line may be the greed of turning a profit and not have faith in God who loves you? It should not be, it does not have to be, but for some strange reason, it is.

Paul wrote, “For we live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). In teaching faith, I’ve emphasized the importance of not allowing your faith to be diluted or distracted by what you see or feel. Paul taught the Corinthians not to look at temporal things that can be seen but to look at eternal things that cannot be seen (2 Corinthians 4:18). How does this happen? Clearly, eternal spiritual things can only be seen through the eyes of faith. Thus, the eyes of your spiritual understanding must be opened (Ephesians 1:18). This is how Moses forsook Egypt and endured, not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh, because he *saw* Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27). Impossible? Not if you truly believe and see with the eyes of faith.

#### Faith Comes by Hearing

Understanding what faith is and how faith works is vital to the persevering prayer life of the believer. The apostle Paul taught the Romans, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). If faith comes by hearing, remember Jesus said, “Consider carefully *how* you hear” (Luke 8:18, emphasis mine). Everyone does not hear the same. Some have gained more insight, discernment, or wisdom because they’ve allowed experiences to influence their ability to hear. The greatest experience that amplifies your ability to hear is being fully surrendered to obey. Could it be you are not hearing properly because God knows the rebellious, argumentative nature of your heart, and He is not allowing you to hear to understand? (Matthew 13:11-15)

Charles Kraft speaks of this paradox of God wanting you to believe but hindering you from hearing and understanding in order to believe:

When Jesus discusses his use of parables, he points out that the secrets of the kingdom will be open to those who commit themselves to the kingdom but closed to those who choose to “look but...not see... [to] listen but...not hear or understand” (Mt 13:13), He then quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 to reinforce his critique of those who deliberately choose to remain blind in spite of the evidence, because they refuse to change their worldview perspectives.<sup>3</sup>

#### *You Must Hear to Call*

By grace, God gives everyone the ability to choose to believe. Faith involves choosing to believe and receiving by faith God’s gift of salvation. All you have to do is ask. Call on the Lord to save you. Notice a key passage in this regard:

[F]or, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:13-15)

The text makes it clear that *everyone* who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Clearly, there are no limits as to who can be saved. This all inclusive statement of salvation’s offer is then corralled by connected questions, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?” These four questions all find their answer in the need for “sent ones;” saved, spirit-filled believers who say “yes” to being used to share the good news of God’s love and grace with others. It puts in mind an old chorus I learned as a child:

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<sup>3</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity With Power: Your Worldview and Your Experience of the Supernatural* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1989), 71.

Somebody prayed for me,  
Had me on their mind;  
Took the time to pray for me.  
I'm so glad they prayed,  
I'm so glad they prayed,  
I'm so glad they prayed for me.<sup>4</sup>

The prayer life of the apostle Paul was one of his significant strengths. You see it in the book of Acts (Acts 13:3; 14:23; 16:13, 16, 25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 26:29; 28:8), and in his epistles (Romans 1:10; 1 Corinthians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 13:7; Ephesians 1:18; 3:16-17; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; 1 Timothy 1:12, 17; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 6), but even if those written witnesses were absent, those who pray and are involved in ministry would know that Paul could not have succeeded as he did without prayer. So successful was he as a prayer warrior and witness that in his lifetime his influence impacted the very seat of power in the Roman Empire, as he sent greetings from the “saints in Caesar’s household” (Philippians 4:21). Not only did he pray, but also in some of his closing remarks he requested prayer (Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).

An appropriate addition to the above chorus could be, “Somebody shared with me, had me on their mind; took the time to share with me. I’m so glad they shared, I’m so glad they shared, I’m so glad they shared with me.” Never forget that this matter of giving yourself for the benefit of others is crucial. You are saved because someone gave of himself or herself in prayer and in ministry to reach you, and spiritual maturity in your life must include giving yourself in ministry to others.

General John Booth, the patriarch of the Salvation Army, one year during the Christmas season, decided to send a telegraph message worldwide to Salvation Army workers. After submitting a short sentence to the telegraph operator and learning how

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<sup>4</sup> Dorothy Norwood and Alvin Darling, *Somebody Prayed for Me*.

expensive it would be to send it worldwide, he shortened the sentence several times until he finally submitted one word. That one word epitomizes the spirit of mature Christian faith not just during Christmas but throughout the year. The word? “Others.”

While the gift of salvation includes receiving in faith every benefit needed in this life, and calling on the name of the Lord to be saved is not just prayer for initial conversion but the cry of the believing heart for all God has promised, you must also understand the goal of the prayer of faith is to equip and enable you to bless others. Let's be clear! Being saved is more than just receiving. God rewards and blesses earnest seekers to be a blessing to others. Genuine conversion includes the responsibility to give of yourself and your resources to serve others. This is the stated expectation of our Lord (Matthew 25:31-46). The call to be a disciple of Christ presupposes your total commitment to carry your cross and follow Him; it includes giving all (Luke 14:25-27).

### *Cheap Grace*

Could it be that you are experiencing problems in your prayer life because you are not a disciple? Is your ability to hear and believe tainted because you have drawn lines in your heart saying, “I will go so far and no further”? This “no” in your heart will preclude you hearing well enough to really believe and commit. This is why some church people who claim to be believers are not. As one called to disciple and lead in the church I ask, how genuine is your faith?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer asked such discerning questions during the days of Nazi Germany when so-called Christian leaders and followers turned deaf ears to the cries of the Jews and even participated in the murderous conflagration. He coined the phrase “cheap grace” in an attempt to distinguish those who are not genuine believers from those who are:

Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has... Costly grace is the gospel which must be *sought* again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.<sup>5</sup>

Many who claim to live by faith (and are members of a church) don't walk by faith. In actuality, their walk portrays an inadequacy of real faith (they have never had a conversion experience). It may mean they should reevaluate the veracity of their conversion experience. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to examine themselves to determine if they were in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). My exhortation is the same: you cannot learn about faith and prayer before you make a full surrender of your life to Christ. And part of that learning should come from a godly Leader; one who ministers the Word of God with a strong sense of God's calling, a sure word from God, and singular courage from God.<sup>6</sup> With these necessary ingredients in place and genuine conversion experienced, the Holy Spirit can then help you in the areas of prayer and faith.

### Faith Requires Believing

The two Greek words referenced above and translated "faith" and "belief" appear in Hebrews 11:6: "And without faith (*pisteos*) it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe (*pisteusai*) that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."

My question of encouragement to those who are having difficulty believing is: what do you have to lose? Deciding to believe and have faith opens the spiritual door to everything God promises. Determining not to believe closes the same spiritual door. Believing is a decision. Look at it this way, there are only two choices: you can decide to

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<sup>5</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: SCM Press Ltd, 1995), 45.

<sup>6</sup> Eldin Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 60-81.

live as though the Bible is true or live as though the Bible is a lie. The obvious outcomes are as follows:

1. You live as though the Bible is true and it is true—you gain everything promised.
2. You live as though the Bible is true but it isn’t—you lose nothing, but you gain the respect of leaving a legacy of integrity, character, and love.
3. You live as though the Bible is a lie and it is a lie—you gain nothing, and you quite possibly will die early and live miserably.
4. You live as though the Bible is a lie but it is true—you lose everything.

Trusting God in faith makes all the sense in the world. Common sense says, “Seek the Lord. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose.”

#### *How Do You Seek God in Faith?*

A good place to begin seeking God by faith is by making a good confession. In recent years, the truth of confession has been lost due to an extreme taught by some so-called “faith teachers.” The truth of having a confession of faith degenerated into some Bible teachers saying, “You can have what you say.” Phrases like “confess it possess it,” “name it claim it,” “blab it grab it,” and other such statements found their way into some conservative Bible-believing circles, and sincere believers were led into making confessions that had no basis in a “rhema” word from God.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Derek Prince deals with the significance of the Greek word “rhema”: “In the original Greek of the New Testament, there are two different words that are normally translated “word.” One is *logos*; the other is *rhema*. At times the two words are used interchangeably. Yet, each has a distinct, special significance of its own. The word *logos* means more than a word that is spoken or written. The authoritative Greek lexicon of Liddell and Scott defines *logos* as ‘the power of the mind that is manifested in speech; reason.’ In this sense, *logos* is the unchanging word of God. It is God’s counsel, settled in eternity before time began, due to continue on into eternity long after time has run its course. It was of this divine *logos* that David was speaking when he said in Psalm 119:89, ‘Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven.’ Nothing that happens on earth can ever affect or change this word that is eternal in heaven. On the other hand, the word *rhema* is derived from a verb meaning ‘to speak,’ and denotes specifically ‘a word that is spoken’—something that occurs in time and space.” Derek Prince, *Faith to Live By* (New Kensington, PA: Whittaker House, 1977), 82-83.

Confession, though often closely associated with acknowledging wrongdoing (i.e. confessing sin), is not limited to that aspect of Christian truth. There *is* such a thing as a good confession, namely a confession of faith where you take a stand verbally for what you believe. Good confessions can be sung and spoken. Numerous biblical truths are put to music in our hymns so that the truth is being confessed as you worship. You have the various formal Confessions of Faith, The Apostles' Creed, The Nicene Creed, and The Athanasian Creed, just to name a few, and these creedal statements were created to add teeth to the daily confessions of the saints. Apostolic Fathers recognized the value of making a good confession. It's a part of fighting the good fight of faith; it's connected to putting on the full armor of God.

The following are four New Testament texts where you are encouraged to make a confession of faith. The Greek word *homologeo* is used in all four.<sup>8</sup>

1. Jesus taught if you confess Him before others, He would confess you before the Father. (Matthew 10:32)
2. Paul exhorted if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and you believe He is raised from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)
3. Paul told his spiritual son, Timothy that a part of fighting the good fight of faith is making a good confession before many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)
4. Hebrews encourages you to hold onto the profession of your faith without wavering because God who has promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23)

Faith begins with what you *really* believe. Jesus taught that your mouth speaks what you really believe in your heart (Luke 6:45). You may repeat a confession following a leader's words, but ultimately you receive what you really believe. It's like

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<sup>8</sup> See page 34 above for a discussion of the Greek term *homologeo*.

reaping and sowing; that which comes out of your innermost being is what is sown and you reap from that sowing.

In 1978 I was the pastor of a small church in the South End of Boston. For six years I regularly preached three sermons per week, Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday night prayer meeting/Bible study. As a full-time senior pastor, I visited the sick, comforted the bereaved, counseled the troubled, evangelized the lost, visited prison inmates, fed the hungry, and strengthened the weak. My weekly salary when I began the pastorate in 1972 was about \$150.00 per week and by 1978 it had not gone up by much. When I accepted the church in 1972, my wife and I had two children and in 1978 we had six, ages 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 and a newborn. My family grew faster than the church and my need for financial increase grew faster than the church's annual budget. And besides, the church's abstemious trustees believed the old adage, "Lord, You keep him humble and we'll keep him poor."

My only chance of increase was to work a second job<sup>9</sup> which actually worked against my goal of building up my church. Here is my semi-syllogistic argument: (1) to increase my salary I needed to see the church grow and its annual budget increase; (2) I needed to be present to give myself more fully to that building up process; and (3) I could not be present because I needed to earn more money to provide for my family. This vicious circle tormented me day and night. I was a failure because I was barely able to provide for my family. Given my station, how would I succeed in saving enough money to help my children go to college, or to provide for my wife and myself after retirement? Of course the thought to depend on Social Security was dismissed. Not only did I feel

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<sup>9</sup> After graduating from seminary in 1975, I was employed part-time as a substitute schoolteacher in the Boston Public Schools. I also, when available, preached as many extra engagements where an honorarium or offering was taken for the speaker.

like a failure as a provider, but also a failure as a pastor. For the life of me, I could not get my church to grow. I was stuck, crying myself to sleep each night fearing I was worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8). To make matters worse, I was assailed by monthly Christian magazine publications lauding the miraculous increase of some church growing from a simple Bible study of a handful of people in a pastor's home to over 1000 within one to two years.

"Not a few"

During this season in my life, I was reading through my Bible and came upon a familiar story in 2 Kings 4:1-7, the account of the widow whose husband died leaving her in debt. The creditor threatened to take her two boys as slaves for the payment of the debt so she appealed to the prophet Elisha for help. Elisha asked her, "What do you have in your house?" She answered, "Nothing except a small jar of oil." Elisha then said, "Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors...borrow *not a few*. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full... Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest" (2 Kings 4:3-7 KJV, emphasis mine). I'd read that story several times before but this time the words "not a few" seemed to leap from the page.

Some months prior to this, I began verbalizing what I considered a "good confession" initiated out of my prayer life, study of the Word, and teaching tapes. I believed: connected with believing you hear God speaking to you about the direction your life is to take, you pray in line with that belief<sup>10</sup> and speak about what you believe. Believing God was going to use me in a greater way, I began to confess, "I believe I'm

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<sup>10</sup> This is prophetic prayer, defined in chapter two, page 26, Roman numeral one, number four.

pregnant with 1000 people;” or I would say to any person of faith I knew, “I have a 1000 people in me.” I cannot begin to tell you how energizing it was for me to just put words to my faith. Especially given how beaten down I felt as a struggling pastor trying to make ends meet.

Well, as I was reading the words “not a few,” I thought, *the size of this woman’s faith could be measured by how many empty jars she borrowed*. She potentially could have become one of the wealthiest widows in her town. As I meditated on the faith implications of “not a few,” the Lord spoke to me, “Son, it doesn’t do you a bit of good in the world to have faith for a thousand people and only room for a hundred.” Just as that widow could not fill jars she did not borrow, my believing and confessing that God was about to birth 1000 people through me could not happen if I had no faith to provide room for them.

### The Goldfish

“What kind of fish are those?” I asked the attendant as we were checking into a five-star resort. The fish swam in a small pond that, by way of several canal-like inlets, was part of the main entrance décor of the resort. Huge fish eight to twelve inches in length were everywhere. They looked like goldfish, were the color and shape of goldfish, but 10-20 times the size.

“They’re goldfish sir,” came the reply, but I did not believe him.

“They can’t be goldfish,” I said, “They’re too big.” The attendant then responded to instruct me in the ways of goldfish.

“Goldfish grow to the size of their surroundings. If housed in a small bowl, they remain small, but if released into an unlimited body of water, like a pond, they will grow to become the large colorful fish you’re enjoying watching.” These were some of the

revelations the Lord maneuvered me into seeing, causing me to walk more strategically by faith and to pray more specifically in line with His will in order to obtain the promise. Isaiah 54:2-3 adds this to the perspective: “Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities.”

### It's Mine; I Have it Now!

There is a side of faith that requires boldness in prayer. This is not some “power of positive thinking” paradigm or an encouragement to fake-it till you make-it habit-forming format. No, real boldness in prayer is the result of a deep and abiding assurance in what you believe. You believe God more than you trust your empirical senses or the knowledge you derive from people or books. Your praying is no longer begging because you spend your prayer time boldly accessing the throne of grace by praying the promise. In faith you thank and praise God you are who He says you are, you have what He says you have, and you can do what He says you can do. You exercise dominion authority in your circumstances by faith. This does not mean you do not have trials or endure hardships, but in the warfare of prayer you know that the battle is the Lord’s. You put on the full armor of God, take your stand behind the shield of faith, put the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God in your mouth, and you arise as more than a conqueror.

Are there flakey people who miss it? Yes, but you don’t have to be one of them. They lack real faith in the truth and trustworthiness of God’s Word, they do not have an intimate relationship with God where the spoken Word of His will is clear, they are acting in presumption because there are areas in their lives they refuse or neglect to discipline.

## Faith without Works Is Dead

Though it is true you are “saved by grace through faith and not of yourself, it is a gift from God, not of works lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9), yet it is also clear that works can prove your faith is genuine. Ephesians 2:10 teaches “you are God’s workmanship; you have been created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for you to do.” Works don’t save you, but works are a part of those who really are saved. Jesus preached in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

## Works

### Work out What God Works In

The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians about the in-working and out-working of salvation: “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12-13).

If you are to experience the fullness of the balanced Christian life, it will require some hard work on your part. Someone once said, “Though salvation is free, it will cost you everything.” Jesus exhorted His followers to “count the cost” (Luke 14:23-33). The apostle Paul expected the Philippians to “work out” (2:12) that which God was “working in” (2:13). Though your works do not save you eternally, yet your works have much to do with the temporal salvation you experience in the here and now and also your works may indicate the quality of the grace that truly saves. God created us to do good work (Ephesians 2:10) and desires the light of our good deeds to be seen by many (Matthew

5:16) and for the world to benefit from our servanthood ministry to them (Matthew 25:34-45).

One's theological perspective needs to be taken into account here. It is no minor matter. The Doctrine of Salvation says all in the Church are saved by grace through faith and not by works, but to teach that our works play no part in the outworking of the salvation experience is to be at most, theologically imbalanced, and at least, realistically naive. There is an obedience aspect to our life in Christ that can be viewed as works. These works don't save you, but when you are saved, the walk of obedience that falls under the category of *work*, strengthens you in the area of confidence that bolsters your faith. Having the proper perspective about work builds your confidence, strengthens your faith, and empowers your prayer life.

### **Confidence**

#### A Crisis of Confidence

Let's say, for example, you have someone who professes saving faith in Christ, but their outward walk is carnal— they lack spiritual growth, and are absent the normal expectations of Christian living and giving. Though they are saved, their disobedience results in them being weak in the confidence needed for faith to work. The apostle John mentions this issue of confidence:

This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. (1 John 3:19-22)

Clearly, this matter of confidence is connected to prayer and as such is connected to faith (shown above to be intimately connected to prayer), and Hebrews 11:6 teaches it

is impossible to please God without faith, for he who comes to God (that's prayer) must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

In this passage the apostle, in pastoral mode, informs his readers as to how they can know (Gk. *ginosko*) they belong to the truth, i.e. are genuine believers in the truth of salvation through faith in Christ. Also included in this introductory statement is how they can set their hearts at rest or be assured in His presence. He then launches into the fact that we should know that God is greater than our hearts if our hearts condemn us. Granted, all of us are prone to mistakes. The song poet of the old hymn of the Church, *Come Thou Fount*, wrote in one of the verses,

*Prone to wander, Lord I feel it;  
Prone to leave the God I love.  
Here's my heart O take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above.<sup>11</sup>*

Given this tendency we have for wandering, failing, making mistakes because of our humanness, the apostle, knowing how the guilty heart can affect your confidence—confidence needed in prayer—he emphasizes the truth that God is greater than our hearts. This does not mean you can practice sin and wrongdoing without repentance, live any kind of way you feel like and just glibly confess, “The condemnation of my heart does not matter because God is greater than my heart.” Remember, when the seed of God’s word is really in your heart, you cannot practice sin because you’ve been born of God (1 John 3:9). There is a difference between the condemnation that is the result of my human condition and the condemnation from God because of sin. God fully expects you to walk free from condemnation because you do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1-4).

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Robinson and John Wyeth, *Come Thou Fount*.

The Greek word translated *confidence* is *parresia*. It means *outspokenness, confidence, boldness in public.*<sup>12</sup> The kind of praying you need to do is prayer full of confidence: confidence in God who is greater than the subtle condemnation of the heart due to your humanness, confidence in your living according to the Spirit (this is where the work of your walk plays a part in the boldness you can have, cf. Proverbs 18:1), and confidence in your faith in the will of God conditioned on His promises.

Another important passage dealing with this matter of confidence in prayer is 1 John 5:14-15: “This is the **confidence** we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (emphasis mine). This passage speaks to the necessity of knowing the will of God before you pray and it sets the agenda where it needs to be—focused on God’s will and not your own. The will of God is based on the Word of God. You know God’s will from His Word just like you know a person’s will from their words.

You might be wondering, “What about the promise that God will give us the desires of our hearts?” This promise, found in Psalm 37:4, is a legitimate promise in the Word, but the fulfillment of that promise is conditioned upon the other words of the text: “Take delight in the LORD...”. God is not promising you whatever you want. Rather, when you make the Lord the delight of your heart, He changes your heart so that you end up wanting what He wants for you.

Hebrews 4:12-16 is also an excellent passage dealing with confidence in prayer and the ministry of the Word to you:

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<sup>12</sup> J. P. Louw, and E. A. Nida, *Vol. 2: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd ed. (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1996), 190.

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with **confidence**, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Emphasis mine)

The apostle talks about the life and power of the Word, its ability to penetrate and judge even the thoughts and attitudes of your heart. The importance of this is its influence on your ability to pray in faith. There should be no attempt to hide from the One before whom you must give an account. Your life, your thoughts, your attitudes, your intentions are an open book; you stand naked before God who sees all and knows all.<sup>13</sup> This understanding should lead you to reverence and respect for our sinless Great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, and to hold firmly to your faith in who He is and what He has done. And ultimately, to pray with a confidence anchored in that faith.

### **Vertical and Horizontal**

#### **You Need Both**

There is a vertical and horizontal application to prayer and agreement we must explore. Visually, the cross is both vertical and horizontal, the greatest commandment of the Old Testament is vertical and the second greatest commandment is horizontal (Deuteronomy 6:4; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:35-40; cf. John 4:20), the ministry and message of reconciliation is both vertical and horizontal,<sup>14</sup> and when we commune

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<sup>13</sup> While I rejoice in the revelation of this passage, one of the greatest passages about God's omniscience is Psalm 139.

<sup>14</sup> In 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 we are taught God was in Christ reconciling the world (vertical) and we have been given the ministry and message of reconciliation (both vertical and horizontal): vertical in that when we minister the gospel others are reconciled to God and horizontal because part of the ministry and message of reconciliation includes the reconciliation of brother to brother.

together in observing the Lord's Supper, since it is a covenant meal reserved for God's covenant children, we need to have a current relationship with God through faith in Christ (vertical) and an understanding of the importance of "recognizing the body of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:23-32) (horizontal).

There is a balance that must be understood and maintained between vertical and horizontal truth, especially as it relates to the influence of multigenerational church health and growth. While prayer may be considered vertical, it also has a horizontal influence and impact often missed by the average church pastor. Daniel prayed three times daily (Daniel 6:10), and though on one occasion his praying was used against him (6:13), it was known Daniel was one who prayed with results. When all of the wise men, soothsayers, and magicians were threatened with death because the king required they give not only the interpretation of the dream he dreamt but the dream as well, Daniel prayed and God gave him the dream and its interpretation. Likewise, you should be known as someone who prays, not just before bedtime or before a meal, but that you are one who spends time in prayer. This knowing has a horizontal effect on those who minister with and around you, and on your people. To be known as one who prays is character influencing. People see you differently, even those not in church, when they know you pray.

Agreement may be considered horizontal, but it also has a vertical influence often missed by the average church member. Since the church, universal and local is being built by the One without whom we can do nothing (Matthew 16:18; John 15:5), and since none who are laborers together with Christ have all the gifts, we need the Lord and we need each other in order to produce a healthy balanced ministry that will reach beyond ourselves and the grave. That's what multigenerational ministry is all about. It is linked

to the vertical and horizontal balances between prayer—our intercessory relationship before the Lord—and agreement—our laboring together in unity where a level of impartation/discipleship and training is reality and not just dream.

From a practical, pragmatic standpoint, the agreement and unity God ordained to be mirrored in family<sup>15</sup> is an excellent example of the level of discipleship that transforms. Notice the multigenerational backdrop coloring the focus of two monumental passages we all know: Deuteronomy 6:4-9,

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates,

and Matthew 16:18, “On this rock I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

Moses recognized training the next generation was essential for survival. I remember one of my mentors, Rev. E.G. Billingsley, telling me, “Son, if the saints could just win their children, we would have to build new sanctuaries to accommodate the multitudes every succeeding generation.” Of course we should reach out through evangelistic efforts to win the world, but apart from that, if the saints could just win and disciple their own families, we would see transformed cities across this country and around the world. At issue is: if I cannot win the son whom I have raised in my own house, how can I win the sons of others? In fact, one of the qualifications of a pastor

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<sup>15</sup> Before there was Church there was family. When the family follows God's order for love, training, and discipline, the family is an insurmountable tool God uses for the transformation of a community. A love for God, His kingdom, and righteousness is best transferred from one generation to the next through intimate family relationships. The truth of family, even its definition is under attack today because Satan understands how powerful family is when God's order is solidly in place. As a father, I never gave over to others the responsibility God gave to me. I taught, trained, in love disciplined, and discipled my children, and my dear wife stood in agreement with me in the process as a co-laborer.

often missed or intentionally overlooked is the one the apostle Paul penned to Timothy in his first epistle to him: “He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?)”

(1 Timothy 3:4-5). Needless to say, if we strictly required pastors or overseers in local church ministry to toe this biblical line, few would qualify. Maybe that’s the problem.

In the second passage where Jesus exclaims He is building His church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it, Jesus is saying that even death cannot hinder the church He is building. Mr. Death and Father Time have seen the rise and fall of every kingdom in history except the kingdom of God (2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Chronicles 22:10; Psalm 145:13; Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 2:44; 4:3; 6:26; 7:14, 27; 2 Peter 1:11). This is true primarily because God is involved and secondarily because the order of God is to make disciples through intimate contact. Those won to the Lord become family, brothers and sisters in Christ. The making of disciples, while it indeed includes all generations, should have as a special emphasis and focus, the young, beginning with one’s own children (cf. Psalm 40:13).

### **Five Metaphors for the Church**

In the New Testament, next to the person and work of Christ is the life and mission of the Church. My pastor was a great one for preaching on the Church. He often said, “When you see the Church, it will spoil you for these manmade organizations we call churches.” The rallying cry from some gospel song writers in a past generation was, “Let the Church be the Church.” Most of what you see called “church” does not adequately represent what Jesus, through the teachings of the apostles, envisioned the Church to be. The New Testament uses five metaphors to highlight characteristics of the

Church that the church needs to be and the world needs to see. Each one has ramifications on the prayer life of a believer.

### The Body of Christ

The church is called the Body of Christ in different New Testament books, but the apostle Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, is the most extensive.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Seeing the church as a "body" with "each one" or member being "a part of it" shouts sonorously clear the truth, WE ARE CONNECTED!— and not only connected, but interdependent. As your physical body has "many parts" or members and all the members do not have the same function, so is the body of Christ. Each of us has specific gifts and skills the Spirit has given or enabled, and we are to serve and function in specific areas within our God-given expertise "for the common good" of the body (1 Corinthians 12:7). Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 4:3-6, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Unity is key! John Wesley, wrestling with the issue of unity and understanding its importance, was famous for quoting a slogan created by St. Augustine that served as a starting point for discussions with other Christian brethren:

In essentials, unity;  
In non-essentials, liberty;  
In everything, charity.

Finally, the apostle's exhortation to "make every effort to keep" this unity is a not-so subtle hint of how vital its existence is in the success of the mission of the Church. We desperately need to "keep" that which God has given, in full recognition of the immeasurable benefits of our unity, agreement, and oneness.

### The Building of Living Stones

The apostle Paul, using the construction metaphor wrote in Ephesians 2:20-22 that the Church is "...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

While the metaphor of the body of Christ speaks of our being connected to each other with various gifts in one corporate unity, the metaphor of building construction speaks of our being joined as living stones together to make a spiritual building in which God lives by His Spirit. The language, reminiscent of worship, is found in 1 Peter 2:5—"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." As with the body metaphor, building construction speaks again of our unity. The church is to be a united house in which the Lord dwells by His Spirit (Ephesians 2:22), where there is harmony of praise ("acceptable spiritual sacrifices," 1 Peter 2:5), and where there is rejoicing of

deliverance: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Imagine a “House of Prayer” (Isaiah 56:7) full of teaching priests (2 Chronicles 15:3) who are a “holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5) and “a royal priesthood” whose major function is to intercede on behalf of others. The result would be spiritual renewal, revival, and reconciliation with God and with others—God’s solution for the troubles of our world.

### The Family of God

One of the great prayers the apostle Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus is found in Ephesians 4:14-21.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

K. S. Wuest, in his exegesis of this passage<sup>16</sup> points out that, in saying “for this reason,” the apostle is referring back to the same words in 3:1 which themselves go back to the idea of Jew and Gentile becoming one body in Christ which grows into a holy inner sanctuary for the dwelling-place of God. “For this reason” the apostle kneels, and not just in body, but more with his heart. He is positioning himself in humility to cry out to God on their behalf.

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<sup>16</sup> K. S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, Ephesians 3:13-14 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

Additionally, Paul's prayer is specifically directed to "the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name." The "family" Paul is referencing in the text is the Church family—those who are in heaven (the Church triumphant) and those who are still in the earth. There is a unity between the saints still here and the saints on 'the other side.' Both are included in the "family" of Christians.

Believers are called "the children of God" (Matthew 5:9; John 1:12-13; Romans 8:14-17; 9:26; Philippians 2:15; 1 John 3:1-2, 10). God is our Father and we relate to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ (Matthew 5:22-23; 18:15, 21; 1 Thessalonians 4:6; James 2:15; 4:11; 1 John 2:10-11; 3:10, 15, 17; 4:20-21; 5:16). This reminds me of the text in Hebrews 12:1 which begins, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses...". The witnesses are not angelic; though it is true the angels observe us and are aware of our pilgrimage. No, the "great cloud of witnesses" references the roll call of faith delineated in chapter eleven, and reflects an understanding of the truth that we are a part of the greatest family in the entire world—the Family of God, His Church. Therefore, be encouraged. You're not alone.

Finally, seeing the church as family assists in understanding how disciples are made. Just as the process of maturation physically, emotionally, and socially is inseparably connected to the development of children in the physical family, it's the same in the spiritual development of disciples. God created us to function in families for our physical and spiritual benefit. Much of the distress experienced in our world today is connected to the growing dysfunction of families. Because of the presence of abuse and society's responsibility to protect children, we've semi-criminalized the disciplining of children with research from the psychological community believing such things as

children who are spanked act out in violence.<sup>17</sup> Of course I recognize there are dysfunctional families where love and proper nurturing are absent and abuse is present, but that's the exception, not the rule. And it should also be the exception not the rule when it comes to the church family. The local church should be the place where love and spiritual nurturing are experienced by all; where we get healed from the emotional and physical diseases the dysfunctional world puts on us, and we gain a new perspective of God's plan of union with the Father in the family of God.

### The Bride of Christ

One of the metaphors for the Church is the Bride of Christ. It has its roots in the Old Testament prophetic utterances of Jeremiah where the inspired writer likens the relationship Yahweh had with His people to a marriage: the LORD is called their “husband” (Jeremiah 3:14; 31:32), God is portrayed as giving a “certificate of divorce,” and the unfaithfulness of His people is called “adultery” (Jeremiah 3:8). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul exhorts husbands to love and care for their wives as Christ loves and cares for the Church. He speaks of Christ presenting the Church to Himself (as a bride), radiant, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless (Ephesians 5:25-32).<sup>18</sup>

### *The Lord’s Supper: Healing and Forgiveness*

Part of our faith connection to Christ as his bride, a blood covenant (Matthew 26:28 cf. Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19), just as marriage is a blood covenant,<sup>19</sup> is our

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<sup>17</sup> The research is inconclusive. The psychological community is divided on the issue of spanking.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Revelation 19:9 where the apostle John speaks of “the wedding supper of the Lamb,” again viewing the Church as having an intimate covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>19</sup> In the natural, the marriage covenant is a blood covenant. When a man and a woman are virgins when they marry, the woman literally bleeds over her husband during the consummation of their marriage. Though the man and the woman make solemn vows of love, fidelity, and trust, yet the solemnization

partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Our Lord, knowing we would need to regularly engage in spiritual introspection, instituted the Lord’s Supper. The annual observance of the Passover was a reminder of the supernatural deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt. By instituting the Lord’s Supper on the night the Passover was celebrated and exhorting His disciples to partake “in remembrance of Me,” Jesus was saying the matter of remembering is for your good. Partaking of the Lord’s Supper is a God-given opportunity for those who are serious to take spiritual inventory. This is the benefit of healing we receive when we partake of Christ’s body and blood.

If the local church is to experience the spiritual strength the community desperately needs for revival and transformation to take place, church leaders will have to do a better job of judging themselves and being the godly examples people follow. This is where a house of prayer makes all the difference. While a pastor sent by God can preach the gospel for people to hear (Romans 10:14-15), the spiritual work of binding the Enemy by engaging in self-examination is the spiritual warfare believers must learn to do. Literally, the salvation of loved ones, family and friends, depends upon the local church’s ability to do spiritual warfare on their behalf.

Additionally, the Lord’s Supper reminds us of the importance of Christian unity in the local church. Unity is the manifestation of love and understanding. Love because of the infilling presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Romans 5:5), and understanding because of the revelation of God’s love, grace, and mercy lavished upon us (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7-8; 1 John 3:1-3). These come about through forgiveness, the second benefit Christians receive at the Communion table. When a believer understands they did not deserve the blessing of forgiveness received, they are more amenable to forgiving

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process is not complete apart from that initial act of consummation where the “two become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). As in the natural, so in the spiritual.

others who also may not merit it. One of the best examples of this is seen in the parable of Jesus in Matthew 18:23-35.

Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. At this the servant fell on his knees before him. "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay back everything." The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay it back." But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

Finally, remember the Lord's Supper was instituted as Christ celebrated the Passover with His disciples. The two events and their benefits are connected. The blood of the lamb of the Passover for Jews at the time is the blood of the Lamb in the Lord's Supper for Christians today. Israel was delivered physically from Egyptian bondage and the Church is delivered spiritually from the bondage of sin (the world, the flesh, and the devil).

When we gather around Christ's Communion table we receive the benefits of healing—His body was broken that we might be whole (Psalm 105:37; Isaiah 53:4-5)—and forgiveness—His blood was shed that we might be forgiven (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:22). You must understand these benefits of the covenant in order to stand in faith when you pray.

## The Army of God

The fifth and final metaphor for the Church is the Army of God. Understanding the call of God to engage in spiritual warfare is important. You are unprepared to do battle when you are unaware that the Enemy has declared war on you. Acting oblivious to the diabolical schemes of the Enemy to “kill, steal from, and destroy you” (John 10:10) results in defeat before the fight begins. The beginning of your preparation for battle is knowledge. God told Hosea how crucial knowledge can be to your survival. Notice Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge...,” and 4:14b, “a people without understanding will come to ruin!” Given these passages it is accurate to say, “What you don’t know can kill you.” If prayer proficiency is to increase in your life, you must recognize the call of God to be a soldier in His army, to engage in the good fight of faith.

What will you need to know to survive the warfare of this spiritual struggle? You need to know and fully understand the necessity of faith, what faith is, how faith works, and how faith can be influenced by presumption and/or a lack of confidence. You need to know and fully understand positional truth: where you stand as you battle against principalities and powers and who you believe you are in Christ. This understanding of “where” and “who” can make the faith difference between victory and defeat. You need to know and fully understand the whole armor of God and how a good confession influences how well that armor facilitates the strength of your prayers. You need to know and fully understand that the battle we fight is not physical but spiritual; it is, in fact, against spiritual foes and the strength of our weapons is multiplied when used in agreement with others who have faith. Finally, you need to know and fully understand that you are not an army of one.

### *The Battle Is Spiritual against Spiritual Enemies*

Though there may be persons the Enemy uses, your fight is not with them, but against the forces of evil behind them. Many a battle has been lost because the believer unwittingly went into combat against human foes. It is imperative that you focus your spiritual attention in the right direction; that direction is not toward people but toward engaging principalities and powers. Paul teaches us in Ephesians 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

### *The Weapons You must use Are Spiritual*

This is not a political fight where the victor wins by out-debating his opponent with philosophical, historical, or sociological arguments. This is an intense spiritual struggle where the truth of God’s Word is your major weapon. In Ephesians 6:13-17 Paul lists the armor of God he expects you to wear. Notice the offensive weapon: the “sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.”

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** (emphasis mine)

### *The Temptation of Christ*

The best example of one using the Word of God as a weapon is Jesus in His encounter with Satan during His ministry-initiating fast of 40 days in the wilderness.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” **Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”** Then the devil took him to

the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’’” Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. (Matthew 4:1-11, emphasis mine)

The scriptures Jesus used to respond to Satan’s temptations are highlighted. It is interesting that Satan adjusted his tactic when, in response to the first temptation, Jesus quoted Scripture. It’s almost as though the devil said to himself, “Oh, we’re quoting Scripture; okay, I can do that.” He quotes Scripture back, but Jesus counters with a Scripture that corrects Satan’s abuse of the quoted text. Three observations:

First, though Satan knows the Scriptures, his use will always be improper because he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). He will not use the Word of God in a proper way to direct you toward the will of God and spiritual benefit. His purpose—to kill, steal, and destroy—will always result in a distortion of the truth of the Word in an attempt to deceive you into doing something outside of the will of God.

Second, Satan quotes the promise of Psalm 91:11-12, “he will command his angels concerning you,” etc.—a promise of protection for “whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High” and rests “in the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91:1). But Jesus knew the protection God offers is not absolute. The “dwelling” and “resting” must be tempered with the will of God. Scripture testifies that some in the will of God experienced a protection that rendered them invulnerable: e.g. Jonah (Jonah 1:15-17), Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (better known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Daniel 3:19-27), Daniel (Daniel 6:16-23), and Peter (Acts 12:5-11), to name a few. But some others, though believers who were in the will of God, were vulnerable, and in faith,

they were martyred: e.g. Stephen (Acts 7:54-60), the apostle James the brother of John (Acts 12:2), and some Old Testament saints (Hebrews 11:37). Clearly, for some believers, God had more for them to do. For others, their work was finished. The apostle Paul is an example of both: he supernaturally survived being stoned (Acts 14:19-20), but at the end of his ministry he was martyred (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Third, even if it is the will of God for you to supernaturally survive persecution or accident because God's work for you is not yet finished, you still cannot act presumptuously as though you are more important than your assignment—"Do not put the Lord your God to the test." Though God may want to use you and though you may be the best person positioned to do a task God wants done, He can always use someone else. I remember my pastor on several occasions saying in the pulpit:

If you think you're indispensable in the church, just die and see how well we do. We'll put you in a box, roll you down to the front of the church, say some nice words over you, drive you out to the cemetery, drop you in a hole, throw some dirt in your face, come back to the church fellowship hall, eat chicken and potato salad, and the church will roll right on.

"God can and will use someone else" is the lesson of Mordecai's words to Queen Esther:

When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. **For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place**, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:12-14, emphasis mine)

Mordecai asked Queen Esther to entreat the king for the lives of her people threatened with genocide. But though he believed Esther became the queen for the specific purpose of bringing deliverance for the Jews (Esther 4:14b), he also knew if Esther refused to be used, God would bring "deliverance...from another place," i.e. Mordecai knew God always has a ram in the thicket (Genesis 22:13).

Some years ago, in reflecting on the temptation of Christ, I coined the phrase, “You cannot demand by promise what you deny by principle.” The promise of protection should not be taken for granted to the extent that you violate the principle of not putting the Lord your God to the test. Jesus was fully aware of how Satan cunningly avoided that truth hoping he would act in presumption and fall outside of the will of God. Many true believers make this presumption, or mistake, every day. For example, one might pray against his high blood pressure while at the same time consuming copious amounts of fried foods, pork, and salt. On the one hand, they believe the promise, but on the other hand, they put God to the test by violating the principle of healthy eating. It’s as though they drive drunk while praying not to have an accident. Remember David’s prayer in Psalm 19:13—“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression” (KJV). This should be our prayer, too.

### **The Holy Spirit**

In addition to understanding the aforementioned metaphorical pictures of the Church, we must consider carefully the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He provides the power and the insight enabling you to balance the disciplines of prayer and agreement. As smart as you are and as organized as you may be, you are not capable of running God’s church. Christ through you must run it in the power of the Holy Spirit. Your charisma, gifts, talents, and organizational expertise may work in the short term, but in the long run no plan or focus uninspired by God will endure. In the final analysis, the word of the LORD in Zechariah 4:6 is still true, ““Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.”

God in wisdom put all of the gifts in the body with the expectation that members would use their gifts for the common good and edification of the body (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:12, 26) until Christ returns. The gifts are grace abilities the Holy Spirit gives to facilitate church health and growth.<sup>20</sup> The ministry of the Holy Spirit is vital to the health and growth of the local church. Jesus told His disciples not to depart from Jerusalem until the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, comes (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). In essence Jesus commanded them to do NOTHING without the Spirit. The Spirit alone knows what gifts, obvious and latent, He can use in just the right way to accomplish His specific purpose in cooperation with all the gifts in other churches in the area. You are not that insightful so that you can ignore the Spirit's advice and counsel. Wake up and pray! You need the Holy Spirit.

As I shared earlier, at the young age of 26, I agreed to pastor my first church—a small predominately West Indian congregation in the South End of Boston. Married with two children and expecting the third, I relocated from Evanston, Illinois (a small town just north of Chicago) where I was a first year seminarian at Garrett Theological Seminary at Northwestern University. For six years I diligently performed the sacerdotal duties as the senior pastor of that small congregation of 40-60 persons.

I have known since my senior year at Moody Bible Institute that God's hand was on me to pastor, and when I was called to the church in Boston and the Lord confirmed it as His will for me, I proceeded in the performance of ministry with confidence. But the inability to adequately provide for my family led me to doubt God's call and my ability to successfully do pastoral ministry.

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<sup>20</sup> Three New Testament passages are commonly used to outline the various grace-gifts (*charismata*) of the Spirit: Romans 12:6-8 (Motive Gifts); 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (Manifestation Gifts); Ephesians 4:11 (Ministry Gifts).

Whenever you are faced with a crossroad, I was taught to turn aside from the day-to-day routine and fast and pray. So I set my heart to seek the Lord's face and drove to New York to the apartment of a spiritual mother to my wife and me. While she remained in prayer for me, I fasted and prayed night and day—setting my clock to alarm every three hours: midnight, 3am, 6am, 9am, noon, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm, etc. On the third day at 3:00pm, while on my knees in prayer, I had a vision. I saw a diploma in the distance unfurling itself as it came toward me. When it got close enough to read, I saw the letters GE at the top and it disappeared.

Because of how unhappy and dissatisfied I was with pastoral ministry, I took the letters GE in the vision to mean I was to return to the university in Evanston. Garrett Theological Seminary in the interim had merged with the Lutheran Evangelical Seminary and the new name was Garrett Evangelical Seminary (GE). So I made application to enter the Ph.D. program in New Testament Studies at Garrett Evangelical Seminary at Northwestern University. I had my transcripts sent, secured the necessary recommendations, studied for and took the Graduate Record Examination, and prepared to leave the pastorate for a return to education in a hope to forge a new future for my family and me.

Several months later, I stood devastated by a letter rejecting my admittance into the Ph.D. program for which I'd applied. Faced with the possibility I had misinterpreted the vision, I prayed, "Lord, I never really asked You if You wanted me to stay, and I will stay if You want me to stay." Honestly, I uttered the last phrase of the prayer thinking the Lord would hear it, recognize my willingness to submit to His will and let me leave. But He knows our thoughts and intentions however hidden we may think they are, and on the inside, I heard Him say, "I want you to stay."

Upon hearing it, I fell to my knees weeping bitterly while praying, “Lord, I’m so sorry. I can’t do it, I can’t do it; I’m sorry, I can’t do it.” It was the first time since my commitment to the lordship of Christ in my life that I consciously rejected His guidance. I must have sobbed for about five minutes or so before I heard the Lord speak again, “But *I told you to do it.*” With that word, something revelatory took place: I understood He was saying, “I would never tell you to do something you could not do. You are miserable because you are doing what I’ve called you to do, but not the way I want it done.” I was doing the right thing but the wrong way.

With renewed understanding and focus, I stood up determined to learn anew how to do better what I had been doing. My major teachers were the spiritual fathers and elder pastoral brothers of my past, and I came to see a need to open myself up to a wider influence. I set out to read books I’d previously rejected because of the doctrinal disparity that existed. I started listening to radio preachers and teachers. I sent away for their literature determined to read it with unbiased eyes. Since what I’d been taught was not working, I chose to change. I researched charismatic teaching with a heart to gain an understanding of another deeper, more powerful ministry I knew I did not have. I’m a third generation Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) boy thoroughly indoctrinated with the Wesleyan Holiness Theological perspective, but I purposely turned off my Church of God mindset, got up from that side of the table’s argument, walked around to the other Charismatic/Pentecostal side and before I knew it, I was speaking in another language I had not learned (Acts 2:4).

For the next three to six months, I was a closet charismatic. During my devotional times, I spent significant minutes daily praying in a language I did not understand. Seeking to understand more fully what was happening to me, I made an

appointment to meet with Rev. Wendell Wallace,<sup>21</sup> a Church of God pastor who had received the Baptism with the Holy Spirit with the manifestation of speaking in tongues. Like Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos (Acts 18:26), so the Lord used Wendell to instruct me in the ways of charismata more adequately. I left his home with an understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and their workings that gave form and focus to my prayers. I began praying the Lord would use me in these grace-gifts to edify the church. Though the end result was amazing, the beginning of my praying led me to feel convicted over my silence of my new experience. God was not pleased with me being a closet charismatic. “I am not requiring perfection from you,” He said, “but I do expect you to be honest with where you are now.”

Most people view change as loss. I was reluctant to admit I’d changed in my doctrinal perspective and experience, but I knew God’s expectation was I come out of hiding. So I called a meeting of my Church Council, a body made up of the chairpersons of every board and ministry in the church. After opening the meeting with the obligatory prayer, I proceeded to share my new experience, the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. When I finished, the chairman of the Trustee Board, an educated African American man old enough to be my father, in an accusatory manner pointed his finger at me and exclaimed, “You’ve changed!”

To that I responded, “Yes Brother Dixon, I’ve changed, but hopefully for the better. And I promise you and the rest of you my brethren that I will never allow anything to happen in this church that is outside of the Word of God.” As we moved toward opening ourselves more to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our services, all heaven

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<sup>21</sup> You can read about Rev. Wallace on the “Rev. Wendell Wallace Memorial Webpage,” <http://wendellwallace.blogspot.com> (accessed March 9, 2012).

broke loose. The church's membership exploded until Sunday morning service was so full we had to put folding chairs in the aisles.

But at the same time all heaven was breaking loose, all hell broke loose as the older membership, fearing the loss of their church identity, fought to maintain control of the finances that fueled the vision. The disagreement caused irreconcilable division in the church and led to my resignation after 10 years of pastoral ministry. My wife and I started all over again renting a ballroom in a downtown hotel. Using what we had learned about the Holy Spirit, prayer, and agreement, we planted a church that in the past almost 30 years has become one of the largest ministries in all of New England.

### The Evidence

The church should hunger to grow with every succeeding generation reaching more and more of its community and surrounding area each passing year. This hunger comes from the constraining, compelling power of the love of Christ flowing in and through us by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 5:14). The Holy Spirit is an ultimate gift<sup>22</sup> every believer must receive. Experiencing intimate communion with Him, praying in the Spirit, and ministering in the power of the Spirit are life-levels to which every believer should aspire.

Many in the Pentecostal Church speak readily that the evidence of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is speaking in other tongues. My theological perspective will not allow me to use the word *evidence* in reference to tongues and the Holy Spirit infilling. If we are to be biblically astute, Jesus told us the evidence of the Holy Spirit's infilling is power: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be

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<sup>22</sup> In these NT verses the Holy Spirit is called a gift believers would receive fulfilling a promise the Father made in the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32: Acts 1:4; 2:38-39; 10:45.

my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

This is not to negate the manifestation of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit enables, but it is to accentuate the truth of the power of the Holy Spirit that believers need to do the work of ministry (Luke 24:49);<sup>23</sup> and the greatest ministry is the power to love. God is love (1 John 4:8). The fruit of the Spirit is love (Galatians 5:22-23). God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Romans 5:5). The love of Christ compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14). Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment concerning love, one greater than the command to love your neighbor as yourself (John 13:34-35).<sup>24</sup>

Love is everywhere you turn in your dealings with God. There’s no escaping it. In fact, the apostle John makes loving your brother or sister the measuring rod for how genuine is your love for God: “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” (1 John 4:20).

To return momentarily to the vertical/horizontal aspects of prayer, we are to be constrained by God’s love to be examples of that love in our faithful devotion to Him (vertical) and our faithful, responsible support of the work of the church and our ministry in the world (horizontal).

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<sup>23</sup> The sense of this text is Jesus exhorting his disciples to do nothing (stay in Jerusalem) until they are clothed with power (Gk. *enduesthai dunamen*) of the Holy Spirit that the Father promised.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39. The new commandment is greater because the basis of love is not how much you love yourself but how much the Lord loves you.

## **Agreement**

### **Create a State of Agreement**

I had heard about agreement from Dr. Edwin Louis Cole, one of the teachers at the Charismatic Conference I attended in Pittsburgh in 1980. He made popular the phrase “The place of agreement is the place of power.” Agreement is a place we all can get to but not without our best effort. It will take being selfless enough to listen to subordinates, mature enough to continue to communicate within the framework of disputing, debating, and even arguing, and wisely structured enough within the framework of your polity and the understanding of your team to know that agreement is a place we all need to get to for the ultimate success of whatever project. Remind yourself while in the process of moving toward agreement to remain Christian. Anger, arrogance, and pride tend to derail the process. And remember to respect the Leader as one who hears from God, understanding vision (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17)<sup>25</sup> is a function of hearing and receiving God-ordained instructions.

Also needed in this pursuit of agreement is the all-important knowledge of the Bible and the determination to be balanced. History, even biblical history, records the failures of those who were strong in their pursuit of excellence but imbalanced: failing to pay attention to physical health warnings, relational connection difficulties, financial opportunities and challenges, or spiritual and moral disciplines.

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<sup>25</sup> The Bible teaches kingdom vision is a function of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and while that understanding is true, there are visions of human origin encompassing business ventures, political campaigns, and sociological changes, etc. It would be a stretch to say all visions come from God. Therefore, the pastor must faithfully prioritize the kingdom (Matthew 6:33) above any personal socio-political vision he may have apart from the agenda of kingdom/righteousness ministry.

## Authority Precedes Agreement

Finding the place of agreement will necessitate one more balance-correcting issue—the discipline of being one under authority. This freedom to do your own thing, or to use the biblical phrase, “do what seems right in your own eyes” (Deuteronomy 12:8; Judges 17:6; 21:25; Proverbs 12:15; 21:2), will negatively impact the pursuit of agreement every time. Leadership must be recognized and honored as a necessary ingredient in the agreement pursuit. To ignore this is to say God’s use of fathering was unnecessary. All of us began under authority, whether the authority of one or both parents. And if they are or were good protective parents, their advice, if followed, would keep you out of trouble or even save your life. Such is the pragmatic function of being one under authority. In fact, the first commandment with a promise, “Honor your father and mother” (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2), recognizes that children obeying their parents, being under authority, can actually serve to protect them from premature death.

Before we can confidently seek the agreement we desperately need, we must settle this issue of being under authority. While there are several scriptures touting obedience to leaders and the benefits of being under authority (e.g. 1 Corinthians 4:14-16; Hebrews 13:7, 17), in my estimation the greatest is found in Matthew 8:5-13.

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.” Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?” The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

This encounter of Jesus with the centurion is one of two occasions where Jesus assessed the faith of the individual as “great.”<sup>26</sup> In the throes of the discussion, the centurion discloses an understanding of authority that is revelatory. Notice the following observations from the text:

1. The centurion, being one under authority, recognizes that Jesus was one under authority. His submission to authority enabled him to see the same in Christ.
2. The centurion defined himself as “a man under authority” (v. 9), meaning he knew how to follow the orders of his superiors, but he described himself as a man with authority: “with soldiers under me, I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” Most of us want the latter without the former being true.
3. As one under authority, the centurion understood the power of words. He knew the power of his own words and understood that Jesus being one under God’s authority would have God’s power in His words.

There are no shortcuts to where God is calling you. The place of agreement is a place of power because agreement enables a unity that is rare. The specters of division and disagreement have plagued the Church both universal and local for generations. Our history is we fight, argue, and debate over significant and insignificant affairs, as the competitive side of our humanity exalts itself in pride, refuses to be entreated, and blunders forward. We separate ourselves from one another and constantly justify our divisive attitudes and actions. It is no wonder the church of God has become the joke of comical television and cinema.

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<sup>26</sup> The other was the Canaanite or Syrophoenician woman in Matthew 15:22; Mark 7:26.

## Agreement from a Biblical Perspective

### *Introduction*

The reformer, Martin Luther, said, “Sola Scriptura”— only Scripture. In a day when philosophical and psychological thinking influence church growth strategies and the cultic machinations of New Age beliefs with their politically correct ideas of Humanism dominate many theological discussions, we need to go back to the Bible. Open your mind to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as you read this next section. All of us desperately need His help, especially when it comes to understanding truth that can improve the quality of our lives. Agreement is such a truth, one that can make the difference between success and failure or even life and death. Seek an understanding beyond intellectual ability. The Spirit gives revelation knowledge. If it were documented, the data would verify that great numbers of ventures fail for a lack of agreement. Strength is short-circuited, and potential minimized when this important, key ingredient is missing or misunderstood.

Change is desperately needed in our individual and corporate lives. It does not come easily; it will not be the result of a casual search for truth; one where the seeker is preoccupied with his own agenda and only seeks change for the sake of appearances or personal gain. No, real change erupts from within you when the transforming knowledge of truth sets you free from the lusts of your own desires, the longings for your own sense of destiny, and the incessant lure of the world with its call to be conformed to its image.

The subject of agreement is too important to be treated lightly or haphazardly. If you are to understand agreement’s truth enough to apply it to your everyday circumstances and experience change, first you will absolutely need the help of the Holy Spirit. Make no mistake; no progress in this spiritual journey can be gained without the

Spirit's guidance. Therefore, the issue is not merely a matter of understanding as much as it is a matter of revelation. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:9-12,

However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has **revealed** to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may **understand** what God has freely given us. (emphasis mine)

Notice the highlighted words in the text: "revealed" and "understand." Without the first, you do not have the second and the One who provides the first and thus leads you to the second is the Holy Spirit. I urge you— prayerfully seek the Lord's guidance as you read. No writer, regardless of his or her skill with words and images can succeed in conveying spiritual truth without the aid of the Holy Spirit. I am no exception. Pray for revelation knowledge and understanding.

Second, you need the help that can only come from a consistent prayer life where in faith you are submitted to the authority of the Word of God. In this area of submission, it will also help for you to be one under authority. This means you should be connected to a vibrant Christian fellowship of praying, biblically literate believers. This is more than just being a member of any church. You must choose wisely where you lay your spiritual head and under whose spiritual tutelage table you put your feet.<sup>27</sup> Choosing a pastor can be a precarious venture. My advice, don't join the church before you are confident about the Leader. To avoid as much of what the song poet called, "many dangers, toils, and snares" you will need an understanding of the truth of agreement. Part of that will come through the experiential knowledge of a pastoral Leader who walks in agreement and who masters its crooked cousin—disagreement.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Appendix C, The Selection of a Shepherd.

Be aware that the world's understanding of agreement can color your thinking and influence what you receive by way of spiritual revelation. This can have a pejorative effect on the way you perceive ministry. Agreement is more than the concurrence of consensus, the conformity of conventionality, or a contract outlining terms that opposites determine should be enforced. Genuine spiritual agreement is where the authority of the Word and the presence of the Holy Spirit are honored. The depth of the truth of agreement in terms of the benefits witnessed in everyday common life, and the long-term multigenerational benefits recorded in history say agreement, especially prayer agreement, needs to be thoroughly studied.

Revelation-knowledge from the Spirit for me grew out of a painfully difficult time in my life. As I agonized over creating a "state of agreement," three basic questions dominated my thinking: What is agreement, why is it important, and how is it achieved?

#### *What Is Agreement?*

Συμφωνέω from σύν, *together*, and φωνή, *sound* or *voice*. Transcribed in our word *symphony*. It has so far lost its distinctive character as a concord of voices as to be used for agreement in the deeper and more inward sense.

—M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*

Agreement is where harmony is sought and discord is voluntarily abandoned. The verb "to agree" in the New Testament (Matthew 18:19), translated from the Greek word *sumphonéo*, is an insightful clue into understanding the deep meaning and significance of agreement. An orchestra performing a symphony requires many different instruments playing in agreement. All the instruments play the same piece but not the same notes and every note and movement is performed in carefully crafted harmony. The conductor, the one leading the orchestra, is absolutely necessary, for without his leadership, the musicians playing in agreement, at the same tempo, with the same interpretation of the piece would be virtually impossible.

Agreement, order, and unity are linked. When agreement is present, things *fit together* like the bricks of a building. Agreement means a genuine unity of purpose exists that will enable the agreeing community to withstand external attack and provide protection and even provision for itself. Agreement is an attitude pregnant with wisdom of the superiority of walking and working together in a voluntary collaborative as opposed to doing an independent thing (Amos 3:3). Voluntary means cooperation and precludes contention and competition, purveyors of a confusion that corrupts and destroys. Agreement is a voluntary attitude that each takes for the ultimate success of the journey or project. It understands the achievement of the goal is more important than the pressing of individual independent rights. It recognizes two is better than one (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12), and union strengthens all who agree to submit their rights for the good of the group. The synonyms for agreement are harmony, unity, cooperation, being joined, coming together, built together, order, and oneness.

To further understand agreement we can examine what it is not. Genuine agreement is *not* uniformity nor is it the stifling of creativity. It will take the unfettered release of every gift God gives to the body for the church to achieve multigenerational health and growth. There is no place for pride or ego in the Body of Christ. If it exists in the Leader, or even in a member of the leadership team, it must be dealt with. While the Leader has the responsibility under God for the vision and direction of the ministry, he does not have every piece of the puzzle to create a perfect picture by himself. Certainly, the body needs his leadership, but he must recognize the plurality of influence specifically in the area of how we do what God wants done. Toward achieving this, you must recognize every Leader needs to be one under authority. In other words, “Every pastor needs a pastor.”

Finally, agreement does *not* mean that you always see everything "eye to eye." True agreement will necessitate serious dialogue and even debate, but the debate takes place within the confines of structure and order. Undergirding this structure and order is the understanding that the struggle is to *agree*. Recognizing that agreement may at times involve a struggle is half the battle. Do not see the struggle as an unrealistic expectation. While it is true that God's Word mandates agreement (1 Corinthians 1:10), it is also comforting to know that what the Lord requires, He also enables us to achieve.

#### *Why Is Agreement Important?*

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

—Psalm 133:1-3

Agreement is important because it brings anointing and blessing. The "unity" referred to in the above Psalm is agreement. It is good and pleasant, or beneficial, when this unity, or agreement, exists. The first benefit of agreement is the anointing of the head, the pastor. Many pastors know the pain of disagreement with various leaders in the church and the weakening influence it has. The corporate anointing is affected by this disagreement, and though the pastor can be anointed as an individual person, yet the headship anointing that only flows when there is a harmony within the body of leaders will be hindered.

Agreement anoints the head, and it also anoints the body. The second benefit is the anointing of the church body (v. 2). This means that within the congregation, the power of sin is broken and the dominion of the devil is destroyed. Whether it manifests itself in a broken spirit, a broken relationship, or in a broken body, the presence of the anointing makes the difference. This difference reaps dividends. When people see the

power of God manifested in their circumstances—when their prayers are being answered, temptation is mastered, and the joyous glory of victory is upon their heads—they grow in maturity and the church grows numerically.

This second benefit is pervasive. It's an anointing that covers like the dew and is accompanied by the blessing of the LORD (v. 3). This blessing is the abundant bestowal of *life*, and agreement is the foundation for it. All who come into contact with it will be drenched with the strength of its favor. The people who know you will see this favor and desire it. It is a grace of the Lord where He enables you to be what He's created you to be and to do what He has called you to do. This grace is an enabling power that comes from this all-pervasive anointing of agreement. If ever there were a time the church needs all it can get from God through principle-centered living, it is now. And the principle of agreement must be considered an essential component in the building of a healthy growing church.

Further, agreement is important because it dispels destruction. Jesus said that a house divided against itself cannot stand (Matthew 12:25). If we could just get a glimpse of what real agreement can accomplish, we would run from division and disunity like a plague. It amazes me how many believers do not believe these words of Jesus. Division leads to destruction, clear and simple. Many think that division is constructive, but the Bible says it is destructive. Some call it a balance of power or checks and balances, but it is just another corrupting influence that hinders the world and the Church is buying into it too.

#### *How Is Agreement Achieved?*

The Leader helps his people understand and achieve agreement as he *teaches* it. This is a neglected truth that must become a part of any orientation training that workers

receive. They must be taught what agreement is and why it is important. It is the responsibility of the Leader to lead and the job of the people to follow in agreement. The word “voluntary,” used in the definition above under the section “*What is Agreement?*” implies understanding. It is an important word because it denotes that agreement is an act of your will. It is a decision. You decide to agree and walk in harmony just like you decide to fight to hold on to your own opinions and have your own way. Agreement does not just happen by accident. It is the result of teaching and careful planning.

Agreement is achieved by understanding that a man of God is a gift (Ephesians 4:8, 11). An important question is: do the leaders believe the Leader is in place by God’s decree? If there is debate as to whether or not God has called the Leader to his post, the attempts at creating agreement will fail. God gives the Leader the vision of the house and his major leadership responsibility is to provide the vision and direction for the house. The leaders are to hold up his hands (Exodus 17:12) understanding that their support or lack of support will make the difference between success and failure. If a leader does not believe that the Leader is the “Moses” who is called of God to lead the church to the “promised land,” then he needs to resign from his position until he respects his Leader as the one that God has given as a gift to the church, or he may need to leave that local church until he can find his “Moses.”

Additionally, agreement is achieved through the understanding that agreement in the church assumes that all of us are walking and working toward a *God-given goal*. A God-given goal is one that follows God's direction and fulfills God's purpose. The ominous balloons of opposition and in-house fighting deflate when this type of understanding exists. This does not mean that we do not question, discuss, and debate decisions that must be made. In the council of leaders' meetings with the Leader, these

are the normal methods used to achieve agreement. But they are not debating the vision or the direction, only the method of achieving the God-given goals. Methods may differ but the goal is fixed. Sometimes leaders strongly disagree with a particular method the Leader may propose, and as they forget their place and the disagreement is allowed to fester, the God-given goal is hindered and may not even be achieved. But when the leaders and the people believe that *God* has given them a goal to achieve, then the goal becomes too important to allow the disagreement about methods to hinder them. They bury their differences and continue to move forward in agreement toward fulfilling that God-given goal.

Moreover, agreement is achieved by strictly following the character qualifications in the Word of God for the Leader. If the leaders of the people have confidence in the character and integrity of the Leader who says he has heard from God, they will submit to the vision and direction he establishes more readily. In the church, this Leader who speaks the Word of God to you (Hebrews 13:7) must be chosen carefully for he is the one who is given the responsibility for watching over the souls of those in the church (Hebrews 13:17). Since it is not wise to jump from church to church, you need to take a serious, intelligent look at the Leader before you submit to his authority. In this regard, see Appendix C, "The Selection of a Shepherd," below.

Likewise, agreement is achieved by understanding, procedurally, that God speaks to the Leader and the Leader speaks to the leaders and the people. The leaders from among the people submit to the delegated authority the Leader has received from God by way of the vision and the direction God has given. This is the first level of the process. The debating and discussing fall into the second level of the process with the understanding that it is the responsibility of the leaders under the Leader to catch his

heart and agree. Having your Leader's heart is important. Having his heart means you see ministry the way he sees ministry. Your ministry within the house would be the flavor of that Leader. This does not mean that you have his personality or that you become a mindless assembly-line worker who is devoid of creativity or style. What it means is you are always conscious that you are not the Leader and that you owe the Leader the respect of honoring the place he holds as the head and seeking to flow in line with the vision of the head.

When leaders fully understand the importance of agreeing with the Leader, he can allow them to move freely among the people, and never fear that the people will be negatively affected. Consistent communication and updating are an absolute must for leaders to stay on the same page with their Leader.

Furthermore, agreement is achieved by understanding the nature of Theocratic Church Government and the requirements of serving and submitting (Hebrews 13:7, 17). Leadership comes from above (chosen by God – theocratic) and not from below (chosen by the people – democratic). This means you believe God sets the gifts in the Body as it pleases Him. The people need to recognize the gift God has given without trying to manipulate or control it. Most of us fail to realize how much democratic church government handicaps us. Oh we can function, just like the handicapped can learn how to function, but please understand that even though we can learn to function quite well with a handicap, we are still... handicapped. This can really be seen once the handicap, the hindrance, has been removed. Miraculous things take place when the handicap of Democratic Church Government is replaced by the agreement of Theocratic Church Government.

Finally, agreement is achieved by understanding that a vision from God will include growth and development; growth and development in the understanding of what God is saying. It is one thing to know, for example, what God has said He wants you to do, but it may be another thing altogether, to understand when and how He wants you to do it. Wisdom teaches you must give time for growth and development in the lives of those leaders who submit faithfully to the Leader. In the process, you must understand that no one is perfect in hand, but we can be perfect in heart. The relationship and trust will grow as you continue to walk together in agreement. God will confirm the word of the true Leader and the leaders, with the people, will grow in confident trust. Keep in mind there is no substitute for time; there is almost always a process.

### **God Still Speaks and Works Miracles**

Significant to the prayer mandate is the belief that God still speaks. As in the Old Testament, so also in this New Testament church age, God calls believers into ministry. Somehow, the Bible-believing pendulum has swung to a place of dispensational denial, where some believe God worked miracles, spoke to and through the prophets and apostles, and gave all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to operate in the Early Church but He does none of those things today. The argument or explanation is, now that we have the Bible we no longer need the supernatural interventions of God through prophetic words, healings, miracles, and the like. While liberal theology rendered God dead and the Bible archaic and irrelevant, some in conservative Christian circles render Him dumb and supernaturally disconnected. They believe and will defend to the death the truth and trustworthiness of the sacred Scriptures and its verbal plenary inspiration, but in terms of “rightly dividing the Word of truth,” they contend that what happened there can no longer happen here, and what happened then is no longer necessary now.

Charles Kraft testifies of his transformation from being a typical dispensational Evangelical to being one who believes Christianity has power today for the miraculous,

Wimber and others kept having what they called “words of knowledge” concerning the physical conditions of various people in the class. Someone would see a picture in his or her mind, or feel a strange pain, or receive an impression concerning a physical problem someone was experiencing...I remember a young woman in the class...telling us that she had been given a picture of someone’s lower back with a very shiny object in the middle of it. It turned out to apply to another young woman who had a back problem and was wearing a brace with a shiny rivet in it! You can imagine my reaction to all of this. I grew up in a more or less “typical” Evangelical church in Connecticut where I imbibed a dispensational approach to Christianity...Our pastors and teachers contended strongly that the miracles recorded in the Bible had actually happened. Our dispensational interpretations, however, kept us from wondering why they did not seem to happen today.<sup>28</sup>

Needless to say, in my experience, like Dr. Kraft, I take issue with what I term “dispensational unbelief.” God still works miracles. I’ve witnessed miraculous signs and wonders take place before my own eyes: I saw an almost totally deaf son of member of my church, healed during a service through the laying on of hands.<sup>29</sup> After the hearing aids were removed, he could repeat a whisper. He’s one of the youth in my church and uses no hearing devices whatsoever. An older woman, a member of my church, received miraculous healing from a very specific “word of knowledge.” She had severe arthritis in both knees, could not bend them without pain, and had actually had difficulty using the toilet. She was healed instantly, wept and rejoiced in front of all who were in church as she squatted down bending her knees. She stayed healed until the Lord took her home. These are only a few mentioned out of many; God still works miracles.

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<sup>28</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity With Power*, 2-3.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Carlos Annacondia, *Listen to Me, Satan! Exercising Authority Over the Devil in Jesus’ Name* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1998), 155-156. God has used this internationally known evangelist over the years in the healing and deliverance ministry. In this section, he dealt with the ministry procedure of laying hands on the person in need of ministry and praying for them, and he emphasized the absolute necessity of faith. This man of God has witnessed thousands healed by the power of God through his ministry. God still heals.

God also still speaks; He has spoken and on occasion speaks to me. Jesus said His sheep follow Him because they know His voice (John 10:4; cf. v. 16). The issue is not that God no longer speaks, but we no longer listen, and to some degree, the culprit is none other than our lack of prayer intimacy. Some of the blame can be laid at the feet of our theological perspective, but even that would be overcome were our prayer lives more effectual and fervent.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A PRACTICAL STRATEGY FOR PRAYER AGREEMENT

#### **Kingdom Praying**

Prayer must be more than simply begging God for what *you* want. The apostle James said that you have not because you ask not and you ask and receive not because you ask for the wrong reason (James 4:2-3). Clearly, when you ask God for things with the wrong motive, your prayer will go unanswered. What then, is the right reason? The right reason or motive is the kingdom of God. Remember the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught His disciples? *Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done.* When you commit yourself to the lordship of Christ, and understand Jesus is sending you as the Father sent Him (John 20:21), you also realize the kingdom is not just about you, but about the will of God being done in the earth. Part of God's will and plan is to use you to accomplish *His* purposes, and your carnal desires are not His focus. His focus is the salvation of the world—a global perspective. It's why Jesus came (Luke 19:10; Matthew 20:28; John 12:32). Therefore, your prayers need to line up with the will and purposes of God and not your own selfish dreams and plans.

#### **Praying The Lord's Prayer**

As you prepare to pray more effectively, know there are several patterns of prayer that can support you. These patterns are systematic paths for approaching the throne of grace in order to obtain mercy and find grace to help you. Patterns may be used individually or in combination with other patterns. The old English rendition of the prayer from the King James Version in Matthew 6:9-13 reads,

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And  
forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

As you seek to establish a time and a place for prayer, including a pattern should be part of your plan. Your effectiveness will increase by planning to use a prayer pattern. The Lord has given you a pattern, an outline for prayer. Use the Lord's Prayer as an outline to follow rather than a prayer to recite. The following is the explanation of the Lord's Prayer outline.

### I. Worship

#### *"Our Father Who Art in Heaven"*

First, notice that throughout the prayer, the pronouns for the ones praying are all plural – "our and us." Individuality gives way to the corporate unity of the body. Your concern must be more for the kingdom than for yourself. When individuals use this kingdom-prayer outline, they should have in view the corporate blessing of the Church. This prayer outline is most effective when those praying are inclusive and kingdom conscious.

Second, notice you are taught to address God as your *Father*. God becomes your Father when you receive Jesus as Lord, believing on His name (Romans 10:9; John 1:12). Therefore, you can call God your Father because of the relationship you have with Him through faith in Christ. Through Jesus Christ, your great High Priest, you have access into the very presence of God (Hebrews 4:14; 10:19-20). Praise God for the blessing of full salvation purchased for us by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Full salvation includes the following benefits:

1. Forgiveness – freed from the penalty of sin
2. Deliverance – freed from the power of sin
3. Healing – deliverance from sickness, disease, and infirmity
4. Baptism with the Holy Spirit – empowered by the Spirit to witness

5. Prosperity – empowered to finance the establishment of the kingdom; provision to fulfill God’s purposes

*"Hallowed Be Thy Name"*

When you pray, begin with bold, audible praise. Praise the Lord because of WHO HE IS, exalting Him using the meanings of His names (Psalm 8:1; 34:3; 48:1; 100:4; 103:1; Revelation 4:8). As you call on God the Father and hallow His name, you should acquaint yourself with the covenant names for Yahweh: Jireh (Provides), Shalom (Peace), Nissi (Banner), Tsidkenu (Righteousness), M'Kaddesh (Sanctifies), Rohi (Shepherd), Rophe (Heals), Shammah (There), and Sabbaoth (Captain of Hosts).

The Psalmist exhorts, “Let us exalt His name together” (Psalm 34:3). This praising God around His covenant names, remembering their meanings and the promises made, brings life and blessing. As you, in worship, run into the refuge of His name(s) (Proverbs 18:10), you will be reminded of promises about who we *are*, what we *have*, and what we can *do in Christ*.

## II. Kingdom

*"Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be done in Earth as it Is in Heaven"*

Jesus teaches that establishing the kingdom of God is the focus of this prayer. As you experience the presence of God through worship, you should, in the midst of that encounter, prayerfully examine yourself in terms of the will of God being done in your daily life. Are there areas in your life where you are not obedient to the Word? Are you prioritizing God’s kingdom and His righteousness in the way you live your life? You must prayerfully examine yourself in the light of His presence (1 John 1:7) first before you proceed to pray for others.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Remember the principle taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. You cannot assist your brother in his area of need until you first recognize and remedy your own difficulty (Matthew 7:3-5).

Next, you intercede for the needs of others beginning with those who are closest to you and continuing to an ever-widening circle of your spheres of influence. An order for example might be the following: wife, children, parents, brothers and sisters, pastor of church, leaders of ministry, friends, saints in need, government officials (city, state, country, world), etc. Your focus in prayer should be the establishment of God's kingdom through His will being done in the earth of people (1 Samuel 12:23; Ephesians 3:14-19; 1 Timothy 2:1-6), as the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:7 "in earthen vessels" (KJV).

Following this, Jesus lists three specific areas where you should pray for God's kingdom and will to be established in the lives of individuals we know by name and by need.

*"Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread"*

You now take the needs of your brother, sister, friend, or acquaintance before God in prayer. Be specific, and since "daily bread" is a basic need, pray for the basic needs you know they have. Remember the apostle Paul exhorts you not to be anxious but instead pray—make your needs known to God with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6-7). The "thanksgiving" part is the faith side of prayer for basic needs God has promised to meet (Matthew 6:25-34). There is a peace that comes when you pray specifically, with thanksgiving, for your own needs (Philippians 4:7), and there is a power that is released when you pray specifically in faith (intercede) for the needs of others. Praying in faith for basic needs (daily bread) is simple because none of your basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, money, etc.) have a mind of their own. None of them can disagree with you. None can determine to withstand your faith in God's Word, and resist coming to you.

You must be bold and specific in your prayer requests. Most folk are not specific but are general in their requests because of their lack of faith. They fear being specific because they fear the embarrassment of failure. But someone once said, “Those who have never failed are those who have never tried.” Failing isn’t the worst thing in the world; quitting is. You will find, in many of life’s circumstances that failure is the womb of success. In order to grow to mature prayer strength, you must accept the responsibility for both success and failure. Many times to succeed will require risking failure. Stretch out in faith and be specific.

*“Forgive Us Our Debts, as We Forgive Our Debtors”*

In this part of the prayer you direct your intercession on the health and security of the person’s interpersonal relationships. The area of focus is forgiveness. Unforgiveness is the father of *resentment*, which is the father of *bitterness*, which is the father of *anger*. Jesus taught that the Father would not forgive you if you do not forgive others (Matthew 6:15). Living in peaceful fellowship with others requires forgiveness. Paul exhorts you in Romans 12:18, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

You will need to proactively practice forgiveness until it becomes a lifestyle. Note that praying in faith for peaceful, reconciled relationships is more difficult than simply praying for basic needs to be met. Remember basic needs (daily bread) do not have a mind of their own while other people do. Their lack of faith or negative actions or attitudes can nullify the effects of your faith. But don’t give up; exercise tenacity and persistence, be consistent in prayer and watch the Lord work it out.

Also, remember you have been given the ministry and message of reconciliation. As you intercede for others, remember relationships needing reconciliation need someone

to be the “christ;” since God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, *not counting our trespasses against us*, to be “christ” (an anointed one) in the reconciliation process of broken interpersonal relationships means you pray one will be willing to take the sin and blame on himself so as to set the atmosphere for reconciliation to take place. Even if one is 100% right and the other is 100% wrong, they can still be reconciled if one will *not count the other’s trespasses against them*. To be “christ” in these situations and open the door for reconciliation and forgiveness requires real spiritual maturity. It is being like our Savior. Jesus said, “As the Father sent Me, so send I you” (John 20:21). Don’t forget you are praying for others using the same procedure starting with those closest to you and extending out. Also, you are praying specifically, not generally, for people you know by name and by need.

*“And Lead Us not into Temptation, but Deliver Us From Evil”*

During this part of the prayer, you are praying that the dominion of the kingdom of God will come into the way we are being led. Kingdom of God come, will of God be done in this all-important area of being led. As our Shepherd, the Lord promises to lead and guide us to where we can lie down in green pastures beside quiet waters and be restored in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake (Psalm 23:1-3). Jesus teaches us to pray that we will be delivered from the evil one (Satan) who seeks to overthrow us by temptation (Matthew 6:13). Instead, we are to seek to be led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14) into all areas of truth (John 16:13). We understand that God has created us with purpose. We have a destiny. Our prayer is that the evil one will not succeed in tempting us away from the fulfillment of our purpose and destiny in God’s will.

This requires a fundamental desire to be in the center of God’s will and to be used of God. Praying this part of the prayer is more difficult than the other two areas. Living

in the center of God's will while desiring to be used of God is the most difficult because of the opposition of a totally evil adversary (the need: great faith). You begin with yourself and continue by praying for others whom you know. Pray for their eyes to be opened so they recognize the distractions and detours the Enemy uses to dissuade them from the patient pursuit of their spiritual destiny in Christ. Remember to be specific: by name and by need.

### III. Thanksgiving

*"For Thine Is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory Forever"*

Prayer should end as it begins, with praise. Giving God thanks is most appropriate. The kingdom is His for we are taught to seek first His kingdom (Matthew 6:33). The Church is His. Jesus said that He would build *His* Church upon the rock (Matthew 16:18). The power is His because we receive power from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). We may plant and water, but only God can make that which is planted and watered, grow. The glory is His. God is the only One worthy to receive praise, honor, and glory for whatever is accomplished in His name (Revelation 4:11). Everything belongs to Him. This ending is a simple recognition of the obvious and in the process, you are thankful for the privilege of prayer. With everything in its proper perspective—away from self and focused on God's kingdom—in faith, close with a thankful amen.

Finally, be aware this prayer mandate taught by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount carries with it the admonition “when,” not “if” you pray (Matthew 6:5). If ever we needed to spend more time in prayer, it is now. Hopefully, you are hearing and receiving this truth-encouragement and are in the process of making plans to pray more.

I trust this is true; it certainly is needed! Use this pattern, and remember, “Prayer time is not wasted time.”

### A Mature Perspective

There is a difference between those who are babes in Christ and those who are mature in terms of what they do for the kingdom. The difference begins with their perspective, the way they see themselves. The babe in Christ doing an introspective survey will endeavor to make repentant adjustments in his walk to qualify more for the “abundant life” benefits promised in the Word (John 10:10; 2 Peter 1:4). And while that is good and commendable, it differs significantly from the mature believer who is asking, seeking and knocking in order to be more useful. Simply stated, the difference is, one is looking to improve in order to *receive*, and the other is looking to improve in order to *give*. The one is looking heavenward in an attempt to be more pleasing to God in an attempt to gain more of His favor, while the other looks at the intense needs of his and the next generation and cries out, “Lord, I need to be more like Jesus, I need more of You, more of Your power, Your compassion, and Your love. My world needs to see more of You in me.” This difference in perspective actually makes all the difference in the kinds of prayers you pray and how intense and effective those prayers are.

Those who pray have more of a visionary perspective. They look at their present circumstances with respect to their long-term influence or impact on the work of the kingdom that can potentially flow through them. I’m aware of a beautiful bright couple, both graduating from a significant graduate school with respected credentials and all of the potential in the world to do good with a quality education. Both husband and wife were graduated into the potential of high paying professions. Both had brushes with the church but found Christ in a more significant way in our fellowship than they had

elsewhere. After graduation, deeply in love, they married. I was privileged to perform the ceremony. They became volunteer leaders in our church. I watched with delight as through their passion for Christ coupled with their brilliance they were greatly used to influence members of our church and especially the youth to deeper commitments to Christ, educational excellence, and the work of the kingdom. But life has a way of creating obstacles that normal Christian living does not handle properly, and if you are not praying you will most likely seek external alternative solutions to your problems that are powerless. Sometimes when you are praying it is the will of God for you to do all you can even in terms of seeking outside help along with crying out to God. But if you are not praying, oftentimes the enemy will hinder the success of the most competent of resources. In all you do you must learn the all-important lesson of dependence upon God with reliance upon His provision and resources.

The conclusion to this gifted couple's story is, despite the counsel and advice of godly pastors and friends, their marriage ended when the sins of the husband's past overwhelmed him. Convinced that his feelings should be honored above the truth of God's Word he separated himself from his wife and child he loved, left the church in pursuit of a lifestyle outside of Christ ruled by the satisfaction of sensual pleasure. Many who do not take seriously the call to prayerfully put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) and run with perseverance the race set before them (Hebrews 12:1-3) miss the inheritance God has reserved for the mature. Those who pray and are mature in their faith in Christ fight the good fight (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7), put the demonic forces that rule in the sins of their past under their feet (Luke 10:19), and stand as victors over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Seeing ministry through enlightened eyes, they understand the hope to which they have been called, the riches of God's glorious

inheritance in them, and His incomparably great power in those who really believe (Ephesians 1:18-19).

Those who do not pray are more concerned with their feeling about their own circumstances in the here and now. Because of their carnal perspective, they are ruled more by their feelings and even by what the world says about this or that. Because they are not praying, they lack God's perspective—the sense that even difficulties have meaning and purpose in the larger scheme of things, or, as was said earlier, "God does one thing to do another" (Romans 8:28). It is only with a praying perspective that a hunger for God and the determination to persevere through trials in order to see the will of God fulfilled that you will press past the powerful pull of the good feelings in the here and now to continue on the arduous road toward kingdom impact and destiny.

#### The Example of Hanna

Hanna, the wife of Elkanah, became the mother of Samuel, one of the greatest prophets, priests, and judges in Old Testament history. Because she was barren and oppressed by her rival Penninah—her husband's fruitful second wife—she prayed year after year for children without success. It was not until she changed her prayer and vowed if God gave her a son, she would give him back to God as a Nazarite.<sup>2</sup> Her commitment to *give* empowered her prayer and changed her future.

#### Developing Givers

There is no substitute for prayer power. Understanding its ability to create spiritual health, revelatory insight and vision, and multigenerational giftings, I determined to discipline my church into becoming a "House of Prayer for all nations."

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Numbers 6:1-8, The Law of the Nazarites.

The strategy is simple: create a prayer cover through organizing the core to pray (EMP) and be accountable to each other.<sup>3</sup>

Creating a structure that supports and fosters accountability (SA) is not easy given the spirit of independence that is alive and well in this generation, and given the recent histories of untrustworthy religious leaders.<sup>4</sup> Two character traits are absolute musts if you are to succeed in creating a SA. The first is godly character. This character trait implies holiness and integrity; it will enable real trust to flourish. The late Dr. Edwin Louis Cole used to teach, “Trust is the currency of ministry.” You certainly will have a problem creating accountable relationships with people who don’t trust each other. The second is humility. Humility is an elusive word that’s difficult to define. One who is truly humble is one who listens, one who does not think of himself more highly than he or she ought to think (Romans 12:3), one who is sober and balanced in assessment and judgment, one easily entreated who readily seeks the counsel of others believing there is safety in the multitude of counselors (Proverbs 11:14). This manifests itself in the ability to submit to authority. No real unity will develop without this grace of submission being in place. Of course there are other important character traits helpful to the foundational support of accountability, but these two are imperative.

#### Structure of Jubilee Christian Church

Elders are leaders and deacons are servant-leaders. Both must have servant-hearts, but in the organizational structure, the elders provide oversight leadership in ministry functions and the deacons serve in those ministry functions as examples of how ministry should be done. The nomenclature we use for auxiliary groups in the church, e.g. choir, ushers, greeters, Sunday school teachers, etc. is “ministry groups.” We seek to

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Chapter Two; cf. also the outline in Appendix A: “A Vision of Prayer Cover.”

<sup>4</sup> E.g. the mass suicides under Rev. Jim Jones and the multiple deaths under Rev. David Koresh.

place core members in areas of ministry commensurate with their individual giftings.

For example, we would not allow a tone-deaf person to become a choir member or a severely introverted person to become a greeter.

The DNA groups are formed out of the ministry groups. Remember DNA stands for Developing, Nurturing, and Accountability groups. These groups meet at least once and no more than twice a month. In addition to the group gatherings, individual members within a particular group choose a prayer partner from the group and agree to manage two responsibilities: (1) To pray for their prayer partner daily (suggestion: upon waking, first thing in the morning); (2) To meet in EMP with their prayer partner for an hour of intercessory prayer once a week.

### *The Vision*

The psalmist wrote, “Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance (Psalm 89:15, KJV). In October 1987, I traveled with five of my leaders from Boston to Benin City, Nigeria (West Africa) to attend the annual convention of Church of God Mission, the ministry of Archbishop Benson Idahosa. I’d heard of his ministry from an evangelist who’d ministered at my church. I will never forget entering their tabernacle for that first service. Some experiences defy your ability to describe it. Your vocabulary is not extensive enough, or maybe there are no existing words adequate to the task of communicating the feeling you experienced.

Imagine 20,000 people inside a multiple-balconied tabernacle praying to the top of their lungs (and there were almost as many outside the building praying who could not get in, and who would stand listening to the service). It was awesome! I will never be the same. After the convention, I used the passage quoted above (Psalm 89:15) to raise the

hunger and expectation of my people. The “joyful sound” is the sound of celebration on holy days, days of festival where the worship was full of exuberant excitement either because of the harvest or the remembrance of God’s deliverance in past history.

And while worship/praise is indeed a “joyful sound,” my application is the “sound” of travailing prayer: the kind of intense faith-filled prayer that proclaims like Jacob, “I’ll not let you go unless you bless me!” (Genesis 32:26b).

What would the result be if mature, godly, Spirit-led, biblically-balanced, and faith-empowered believers took a protracted spiritual stand in agreement prayer against the rulers of the darkness in their area? (Ephesians 6:10-12) I’m referring to an army of prayer warriors who have been trained by their servant-Leader how to stand in agreement (1 Corinthians 1:10), be clothed with the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18), and pray with authority for the transformation of all that is negatively detrimental to the life of their region. If one church took the challenge to genuinely be a “House of Prayer,” and prayer partners covered each other and their families, the church would reap a harvest it has never seen. I envision a “prayer movement” spreading from church to church as other pastors and their people see the results and determine not to be outdone. I see the miraculous power of the Spirit, meeting hungry seekers in simple prayer gatherings, providing healing and deliverance apart from anyone “ministering” to them.

When asked, “How did it happen?”, the response heard again and again will be, “We don’t know; we were just praying.”

By prayer agreement, the authority of the Enemy would be broken, and strongholds would be demolished.<sup>5</sup> The hunger for sobriety would miraculously come

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<sup>5</sup> Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire: A.D. 100-400* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 26. Professor MacMullen records the apostle John returning from the Isle of Patmos to the city of Ephesus, entering the Temple of Diana, cursing the altar, and seeing it crumble. That level of prayer

upon addicts, the desire to study would miraculously come upon inner city students (kids at risk), and a rededication commitment to “do no harm” would come upon physician abortionists. Families would be united and stabilized as God turns the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers (Malachi 4:6). And the word will go out that if you want to do crime, sell drugs, gangbang, drop out of school, run after worthless sexual extremes, gamble, lie, cheat, steal, get an abortion, divorce, be unfaithful, or involve yourself in any number of negative activities, this particular praying area is no place for you.

My vision sees families together, children honoring their parents, teens finishing school, graduating from college with honors and being productive. I know prayer can do it. Jubilee Christian Church is a witness. We just need to find a way as a society past the atheistic or agnostic dissenters, and let go and let God “heal our land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). Prayer agreement says, “Let’s pull out all the stops and give God a chance to do what He’s promised. Let’s have faith and pray!”

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power, church agreement, and Word authority is still available today. Let us pay the price in prayer agreement to demolish strongholds today to save the next generation today for tomorrow.

## APPENDIX A

### A VISION OF PRAYER COVER: JUBILEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

#### Introduction

- I. The history of revival documents the presence of prayer and repentance in past moves of God in revival; in recent history, George Otis, Jr. documents with Transformation Videos that prayer has brought about a brokenness and repentance leading to fellowship, unity, love, and transformed communities.
- II. The prophetic word about New England (NE) is that a revival will begin in NE, spread across the country, and impact the world.<sup>6</sup>
- III. The recent word received in prayer:
  - A. God reminded us He promise to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28)
  - B. An open vision of a family in a restaurant: parents were Christian but in marital trouble. As their young daughter was praying for meal, her parents began to openly weep and repent to each other. A waitress witnessing it begins to weep, and weeping and repentance broke out from table to table.
  - C. Using Chapter Four, page 70 “Not a Few,” connect the Lord speaking to me about my saying, “I have (am pregnant with) a 1000 people in me with the Lord saying that He was preparing to pour out His Spirit and revival is coming, and the question, “How will we effectively house the harvest.”
- IV. Harvest Homes are the solution: the saints ministering to each other in small groups; we determined that organizing the core around the foundation of prayer was the answer. The Vision of Harvest Homes became DNA prayer groups.

#### Strategy

- I. Our fundamental strategy is to create a Structure of Accountability (SA).
- II. Organize the church:
  - A. The elders need to have responsibility over specific ministry groups.
  - B. The deacons, servant leaders, need to be interspersed throughout every ministry group.
- III. Use the ministry divisions within the church to launch small DNA groups.
- IV. Gather each ministry, one at a time, and share the vision.
- V. Divide each ministry into small DNA groups (Developing, Nurturing, Accountability groups) of four to eight persons (try to keep an even number in each group)
- VI. Create prayer partners within these small groups.
- VII. Assign a day and time when they will pray together in Early Morning Prayer (EMP).
- VIII. The SA is to support our being faithful in this work of prayer.
- IX. Eventually, after several months, prayer partners will be exchanged within the groups; this process will continue until all have partnered in prayer.

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<sup>6</sup> Wilkerson, David, *The Vision* a book published in 1974 is out of print. In it David Wilkerson predicted several events true today, e.g. X-rated TV programming. A NE revival was one of those predictions.

X. The Phases:

- A. One – organize the church around elders and deacons (cf. Strategy 2)
- B. Two – set the day and time when groups and partners pray in church. Partners should continue several months for SA to be established.
- C. Three – after the prayer-agreement-habit (PAH) is established with partner, the groups will exchange partners. This process will continue until everyone in the group has partnered with everyone in the group.
- D. Four – this phase is where each prayer warrior will begin to bring others, those who are in the church, into their specific ministry and into this ministry of pray agreement.

**Responsibility**

- I. Grab a Weapon; Stand a Post: the groups will meet at their day and time for one hour per week to pray with and for each other's needs, the church, our city, and the world. Flexibility is exercised around the day and time of EMP.
- II. Prayer partners will pray for their partner daily upon waking first thing in the morning. This will provide a needed prayer cover for everyone.
- III. At least once, at the most twice a month, each DNA group will meet for fellowship. While prayer is vertical, fellowship is horizontal. Both are needed to build strong believers. The meeting will open and close with prayer, the major purpose of each gathering is fellowship where loving accountability is experienced (1 John 1:7).

**Expectation**

- I. We expect to see a change in the quality of life in the house as the benefit of DNA group ministry takes hold, the prayer ministry of the house is strengthened, and the covering is effective.
- II. We expect the Lord to make a distinction between those who are involved in ministry, prayer, and fellowship and those who are not. (Egypt/Goshen)
- III. We expect an increase in the hunger for righteousness (Matthew 5:6) and for the desire to be involved in ministry, prayer, and fellowship to increase.
- IV. We expect other local churches to follow this pattern as its benefits become more and more evident.
- V. We expect transformation to be evident in...
  - A. The unity of the churches across denominational and doctrinal lines.
  - B. The influx of men into the kingdom.
  - C. The establishment of stronger nuclear families.
    - 1. Fathers and mothers together raising children
    - 2. Lower divorce percentage
  - D. The increase of youth graduating from High School and college: better scores (MCAS, SAT, etc.)
  - E. The decrease in negative social statistics:
    - i. Drugs (legal and illegal), cigarettes, etc.
    - ii. Abortion, suicide
    - iii. Health disparities
    - iv. Crime, recidivism
  - F. The city becoming more kingdom conscious and less anti-God conscious and especially anti-Christ conscious.

### **Corporate Prayer Focus 1**

- I. Restoration of men and the establishment of righteous leaders (Malachi 4:18; Matt. 5:6).
- II. Restoration of healthy families (Ephesians 3:15-20)
- III. Restoration of prosperity in terms of “true riches” (Luke 16:11; 2 Cor. 9:11)
- IV. Restoration of spiritual balance in education (Proverbs 9:10-11)
- V. Restoration of the Kingdom of God vision (Matthew 6:33)

### **Corporate Prayer Focus 2**

- I. Isaiah 43:5-7 Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, “Give them up!” and to the south, “Do not hold them back.” Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory, whom I formed and made.
- II. Isaiah 55:5 Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for He has endowed you with splendor.

The following corporate prayer is based upon the above promises:<sup>7</sup>

Father, we bind the enemy in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We bind the prince of the **north (south, east, and west)** and command that he release those who he has bound. Father, we ask that you draw by Your Spirit those who, according to Your will, should be a part of this house. We summon our sons and daughters, those who You have ordained to be a part of this ministry; we summon the nations to come so a united multicultural expression of the kingdom of God will be seen in this ministry, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

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<sup>7</sup> There are those whose eschatology does not allow them to see these as promises to the New Testament Church. This is unfortunate because not seeing the church in these verses actually hinders them from standing in faith.

## APPENDIX B

### BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF AGREEMENT

We see agreement mirrored in many different avenues, but none more poignantly than Old Testament history. The following are five Old Testament events where the empowering catalyst of agreement can be seen:

1. **The building of the Tower of Babel** (Genesis 11:6-7). The record says that the people all spoke the same language. This implies that no communication barriers existed. They fully understood one another. There was a harmonious flowing together of their different gifts. The normal conflicts that occur because the various workers did not understand their particular function as it related to the whole, did not exist. They all spoke the same language. What a powerful statement. What a powerful potential. The strength of many operated to accomplish one goal—the building of a tower. And the capstone is that their potential is confirmed by the words of God recorded by the inspired writer, "nothing they plan to do (will be) impossible" (Genesis 11:6). That's the strength of agreement. We in the church and in secular organizations can take a lesson from these builders. We all need to learn how to get to the place structurally, where we all speak the same language: the language of agreement.
2. **The Exodus from Egypt** (Exodus 12:1-30). Israel's agreement with the Word of the Lord spoken through Moses saved them in the destruction of the firstborn in Egypt (Exodus 12:21-28).
3. **The battle between Israel and Amalek** (Exodus 17:8-13). We see in Moses, Aaron and Hur on the hill holding up the rod is a picture of agreement within leadership (Exodus 17:10-13).
4. **The battle between Israel, led by Joshua, and Jericho** (Joshua 6-7). Joshua overcame Jericho by agreement. Doing exactly as Joshua ordered, Israel marched in agreement around Jericho and won a great victory (Joshua 6). By contrast, the defeat at Ai is a picture of disagreement and disobedience (Joshua 7).
5. **The victory of Gideon's 300 over Midian** (Judges 7). Gideon required that the 300 totally agree with him (Judges 7:16-18). This final account is teaching that the agreement of 300 is more powerful in accomplishing God's will than the disagreement of 32,000.
6. **In the New Testament**, we also see the structure for local church agreement in the exhortation by the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 1:10; 4:14-17). Every pastor has the right to require his people to operate according to the rhythm or key of his song. This is what Paul taught by sending his son Timothy who was to remind the Corinthian church of his way of life in Christ Jesus

(1 Corinthians 4:17), i.e. Paul had a way he did things in the churches he established. Paul's way was Paul's way, not Peter's. This understanding is important because it eliminates confusion. The flavor of the ministry will be that of the pastor and that's the way it should be.

## APPENDIX C

### THE SELECTION OF A SHEPHERD

#### **Introduction**

The choice of spiritual leadership is an important one requiring a spiritual judgment that's anchored in the truth of God's Word and good common sense. Common sense (which is not very common) dictates that you "look before we leap."

The one responsible to watch over your soul must be respected enough by you to rebuke and correct you without you running for cover. If you run from him or her at the first sign of correction, it will nullify the God-ordained-benefit he is to be to you. You cannot see yourself as open to God's government and, at the same time, casually remove yourself from the protective covering of that government. He of whom it is said, "The government shall be upon His shoulders," is the One who has given gifted person and delegated authority to them for your benefit (Ephesians 4:8-12). They are responsible for shepherding God's flock (Acts 20:28). As shepherds, their major duties fall into two categories: *feeding* and *leading*. They can do neither well if they are not respected. God desires to lead us all into green pastures, but He cannot lead us if the Leader He appoints to be over us is not respected.

Your development into a strong believer who is equipped for God's service will depend, in large measure, upon your submission to pastoral authority. You must prayerfully examine the character of the one to whom you will entrust the oversight of your most precious possession—your soul. The following are the questions that you should ask yourself about the pastor to whom you will submit –

1. Is he a man of godly character, one whose lifestyle of holiness and personal integrity are without question? (1 Timothy 3:2, 7) A wise expression states, "More is caught than is taught." He cannot impart what he is not. If you are going to follow a man, make sure he is in reality – a man of God. Not just some brother who went to Seminary or someone whose father left him the church. Make sure the one who stands before you to proclaim the truth of the Word of God is walking in the light of that truth, and loves the God of that truth with all of his heart. He must have clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4). Accept nothing less.
2. What is the quality of his relationship with his wife and children? (1 Timothy 3:4-5) Are these relationships stable enough to provide an anchor for you in these times of change and chaos? Society is in desperate need of anchors and pillars. An anchor keeps a vessel from drifting with the winds and the waves of the ocean. A pillar is a structure that provides supports for a building. It must be strong, straight, and stable if the building is to withstand the negative effects of storms. The example that your pastor sets in his personal relationships actually enables him to be an anchor and a pillar in the lives of those who exercise confidence in him. His example also adds the credibility of success to his counsel and preaching.

3. Does this man know the Word of God? Is he a man of the Word, grounded in the truth and wisdom of the Scriptures? Do you sense in him that he loves the truth and is a reverent student of the Scriptures? (1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-2)
4. What is your sense of the genuineness of his call to pastoral ministry? Do you evidence in him the call, ordination, and anointing of God to minister through the public preaching and teaching of the Word of God? (John 15:16) This has to do with recognizing a gifting from God. God gives pastors (Ephesians 4:11). No one, no matter how charismatic or articulate, should choose for himself pastoral ministry. He must be called (Hebrews 4:5).
5. What is his vision for ministry? In what direction is he going? Do you sense, in the sharing of his heart, that he has heard a word of revelation from God (Habakkuk 2:2-4) and is running by faith in the direction of his destiny? A good man may have the pieces of his life together in the first three areas above, but if he is not called and has not waited long enough to hear a word of God's direction and vision (Proverbs 29:18) for his life, he is not ready to lead others.

## APPENDIX D

### AGREEMENT PRAYING

#### Introduction

Have you ever walked into a room full of people praying? I have. It is one of the most powerful events I've ever experienced. It is corporate concert prayer, reminiscent of that which took place in Acts 4:23-3:

And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.' "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Agreement praying is agreeing side-by-side, in tandem, with another believer for various, mostly intercessory, needs. It is a productive way of praying with a prayer partner. It's simple, sharing format facilitates praying effectively with another person without necessitating lengthy discussions or testimonies. The prayer benefit of agreeing with someone is maximized in a convenient and timely manner. The procedure is simple:

1. Two believers sit praying together: person "A" prays aloud for a need he knows (a few minutes). Person "B" quietly agrees in prayer (not silently) while person "A" is praying; he does not necessarily have to be familiar with the need.
2. After person "A" finishes praying for the need, person "B" briefly prays aloud for the same need, for about a minute or so. He then goes on to pray a few minutes for another need about which he knows.
3. After person "B" finishes praying for the new request, person "A" prays aloud in agreement for the same need, and afterwards goes on to pray for a new request. And on it goes.

### **Corporate Agreement**

Corporate Agreement is where a leader of a group of prayer warriors announces and explains a specific prayer need and everyone prays aloud for that need. In 1987, I walked into the beginning of a church service in Benin City, Nigeria where 20,000 believers were praying aloud for the service. It was awesome; I will never forget it; it changed me. A cowbell had to be rung to quiet them for the service to officially begin. I brought that experience to my church.

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May 2012 marks 40 years of pastoral ministry in the Boston Area. Gideon and his wife have been happily married for 45 years and have eight grown, married children, all of who are passionate for Christ and His kingdom. They have 24 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. They co-pastor Jubilee Christian Church, one church in two locations: Boston and Stoughton, Massachusetts. As the bishop of a network of independent churches called “Church Without Walls, International,” they supply pastoral oversight and support for churches in the United States, Egypt, Kenya, and Uganda.

For discipleship purposes Gideon has self-published a number of booklets on Theology, Doctrine, and Foundational Truth.